J. A. Benton.

Class ..... Book .....

Accession No. 4816

PACIFIC THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

LIBRARY.

GIFT OF

REV. J. A. BENTON, D.D.

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2026

https://archive.org/details/parabolicteachin0000revd_n4o9

THE

PARABOLIC TEACHING OF CHRIST;

OR, THE

Engravings of the New Testament.

BY THE

REV. D. T. K. DRUMMOND, B.A., OXON.,

INCUMBENT OF ST. THOMAS' ENGLISH EPISCOPAL CHAPEL, EDINBURGH.

GRADUATE THEOLOGICAL UNION
LIBRARY
1961

NEW YORK:
ROBERT CARTER & BROTHERS,
No. 285 BROADWAY.
1855.

BT
375
D78
1855

FX 34
D8 44

STEREOTYPED BY
THOMAS B. SMITH,
82 & 84 Beekman Street.

E. O. JENKINS,
PRINTER,
22 & 24 Frankfort St

CONTENTS.

PAGE

INTRODUCTION, ... v

PART I.

MAN IN SATAN'S KINGDOM—HIS CONDITION, HIS ACTINGS, AND HIS PROSPECTS.

CHAPTER I.—THAT WHICH DEFILETH A MAN—THE LIGHT OF THE BODY—THE SICK, ... 15

II.—THE STRONG MAN ARMED—THE UNCLEAN SPIRIT GOING OUT OF A MAN, ... 24

III.—THE RICH FOOL, ... 35

IV.—CHILDREN IN THE MARKET-PLACE—THE MOTE AND THE BEAM—THE STRAINING OFF A GNAT—CLEANSING THE OUTSIDE OF THE CUP—WHITED SEPULCHERS—GRAVES WHICH APPEAR NOT—THE PHARISEE AND SADDUCEE, . . . 45

V.—THE AX LAID TO THE ROOT OF THE TREES—THE FLOOR THOROUGHLY PURGED, ... 60

VI.—THE BLIND LEADING THE BLIND—UNPROFITABLE SERVANTS, 66

PART II.

THE PRINCE OF THE KINGDOM OF LIGHT.

CHAPTER I.—THE DOOR—THE GOOD SHEPHERD, ... 80

II.—THE TRUE VINE, ... 93

III.—THE ROCK—THE STRONGER THAN HE—THE PHYSICIAN, . 109

IV.—THE BRIDEGROOM—THE OLD AND NEW GARMENT—THE OLD AND NEW WINE, ... 124

V.—THE SHEPHERD LAYING DOWN HIS LIFE—THE CORN OF WHEAT DYING—THE BRAZEN SERPENT, ... 137

VI.—LIVING WATER—LIVING BREAD, ... 149

PART III.

CHRIST'S WORK OF GRACE IN ITS PERSONAL AND EXPERIMENTAL CHARACTER.

CHAPTER I.—THE LOST SHEEP—THE LOST PIECE OF SILVER—THE LOST SON, ... 165

PAGE

CHAPTER II.—THE WIND BLOWING WHERE IT LISTETH—THE TWO SONS —THE BARREN FIG-TREE, ... 239
III.—THE BROAD AND NARROW WAY—THE MAN BUILDING A TOWER—THE TWO KINGS AT WAR, ... 265
IV.—THE LOWEST ROOM—THE TWO BUILDERS—THE TWO DEBTORS—THE GOOD SAMARITAN, ... 277
V.—THE UNFORGIVING SERVANT—THE LABORERS IN THE VINEYARD, ... 300
VI.—THE UNJUST STEWARD—THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS, . 317
VII.—THE PHARISEE AND PUBLICAN—THE SON ASKING BREAD—THE FRIEND AT MIDNIGHT—THE UNRIGHTEOUS JUDGE, . 333
VIII.—THE SALT OF THE EARTH—THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD—THE OFFENDING EYE, FOOT OR HAND—BROTHER, SISTER, AND MOTHER, ... 351

PART IV.

CHRIST'S WORK OF GRACE, IN ITS HISTORICAL AND PROPHETICAL CHARACTER.

SECT. I.—GENERAL RECEPTION AND PROGRESS OF THE GOSPEL.

CHAPTER I.—THE SOWER—THE GROWTH OF THE SEED—THE WHEAT AND THE TARES, ... 359
II.—THE MUSTARD-SEED—THE TREASURE IN THE FIELD—THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE—THE DRAG-NET, . . . 382

PART V.

SECT. II—THE CALLING AND CASTING AWAY OF THE JEW, THE CALLING AND BRINGING IN OF THE GENTILE.

CHAPTER I.—THE GREAT SUPPER, ... 391
II.—THE WICKED HUSBANDMEN—THE MARRIAGE OF THE KING'S SON, ... 397

PART VI.

SECT. III.—THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST.

THE DAYS OF NOAH AND LOT—THE WOMAN IN TRAVAIL—THE FIG-TREE PUTTING FORTH HER LEAVES—THE LIGHTNING SHINING—THE CARCASS AND THE EAGLES—THE WAITING SERVANT—THE TEN VIRGINS—THE TALENTS—THE SHEEP AND THE GOATS, ... 410

APPENDIX, ... 435

INTRODUCTION.

In publishing the present work on the Parables of our Lord Jesus Christ, I feel it to be necessary to offer some remarks on the following points: *First*, as to what is meant by a parable; *next*, as to the principle of interpretation which I have adopted; and *then*, as to the method of arrangement on which I have proceeded.

There is a perfectly clear and broad distinction to be observed between the parable and the fable or the myth. This is well laid down by Alford in his Notes on the New Testament. "The *parable* is not a *fable*, inasmuch as the fable is concerned only with the maxims of worldly prudence, whereas the parable conveys spiritual truth. The *fable* in its form rejects probability, and teaches through the *fancy*, introducing speaking animals, or even inanimate things, whereas the *parable* adheres to probability, and teaches through the *imagination*, introducing only things which may possibly happen. Nor is the parable a *myth*, inasmuch as in mythology the course of the story is set before us *as the truth*, and simple minds receive it as the truth, only the reflecting mind penetrates into the distinction between the vehicle and the thing conveyed; whereas in the parable these two things stand distinct from one another to all minds, so that the simplest would never believe in the parable as fact."

The above distinction is clear and well defined. When, however, we come to compare the parable with the allegory or the proverb, we find the distinction not so easily traced, and the

affinities much stronger. It is possible in strictness of definition to separate them. Thus a proverb may be defined, as "a *trite wayside* saying," passing current in ordinary conversation, and which *may* or *may not* be based on that which is parabolic. As an example of the first, we have "Physician, heal thyself;" of the last, "Honesty is the best policy." The former is parabolic —the latter is not. The allegory, again, is self-interpreting. The narrative is so blended with the actual truths intended to be illustrated, that it speaks for itself, "the imaginary persons and actions are put in the very places and footsteps of the real ones, and stand there instead of them, declaring all the time by their names and actions who and what they are." The Pilgrim's Progress is a remarkable example of this.

But these last distinctions, clear as they may be for the purpose of laying down an arbitrary definition, become quite useless when applied to the parables as delivered by our Lord Jesus Christ. It appears to me that no such distinctions were ever intended to be made in the New Testament; and I believe that the attempt to carry them out has been the cause why the parabolic teaching of Jesus has not generally been set forth with that breadth and fullness which so wonderfully characterize it. Thus Mr. Trench, in his Notes on the Parables, altogether passes by the parables of the Good Shepherd and the True Vine, because they partake more of the character of allegory than of parable, while he treats as a proverb what Jesus said, "If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch," though, at the same time, he admits that these words may be regarded as a "concentrated parable." It is also strange that in a work professing to be "on the Parables," and not on *some* only of the parables, he should altogether have omitted such parables as those of the Two Builders, the Old and New Garment, and others equally important, which may be brought under the head even of the strict definition he has himself laid down.

When we come fairly to look at the subject, we shall find it to be impossible to lay down any rule which can be universally applied, in order to distinguish between allegory, proverb, and parable, in the New Testament. Thus, as regards the allegory. We have a notable example of this in the Epistle to the Galatians; and yet it is clear that it fails altogether in the very point by which, in the strictness of such a definition as is given above, it ought to be distinguished. There is no self-interpretation in it. The Apostle gives a portion of history, and *then* shows how that history illustrates some important truths. Besides, if this definition were strictly carried out, the parable of the "Rich man and Lazarus" ought no longer to be considered a parable but an allegory, inasmuch as it is assuredly interpenetrated with that which interprets the story as it proceeds. What definition can be applied to the Pilgrim's Progress as an allegory which may not equally well be applied to this parable?

Then, again, as to the proverb, what is admitted by Mr. Trench, sufficiently shows the importance of not pressing a definition here also. If a proverb be, as he truly remarks, often a "concentrated parable," or as Alford, on the other hand, says of the parable, that it is an "expanded proverb," then why should we, in an enlarged view of the parables, exclude any because of a proverbial character which may have been given to them? The brevity of a parable, or its concentration, does not make it the less forcible or instructive. The Parables of the Mustard-Seed and the Leaven are always treated *as* parables, and are not regarded as less instructive, because they are short, pointed, and concentrated. Surely, then, such illustrations as resemble these in force and brevity, such as that already quoted, "If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch," ought not to be the less classed among the parables of Jesus, though they may have passed at length into the proverbial language of a people.

But besides all this, the very language of the New Testament

itself forbids any such rigid application of a rule whereby to distinguish between the allegory, the proverb, and the parable. In those remarkable chapters of the Gospel of St. John, where the parables of the Good Shepherd and the True Vine occur, the Evangelist calls them neither parables nor allegories, but *proverbs* (*Παροιμία*). "It is not difficult to explain how this interchange of the two words should have come to pass. Partly it arose from the fact of there being but one word in the Hebrew to signify both parable and proverb, which circumstance must have had considerable influence upon writers accustomed to think in that language, and is itself to be explained from the parable and proverb being alike enigmatical and somewhat obscure forms of speech, 'dark sayings,' uttering a part of their meaning, and leaving the rest to be inferred. This is evidently true of the parable, and, in fact, of the proverb."—(Trench.) Surely there is ample reason here for relaxing any rule which might in fact create a distinction manifestly not in the mind of the Inspired Writer himself. Again, the Evangelist St. Luke in recording, what some regard simply as a proverb, "Can the blind lead the blind," etc., expressly prefaces it with these words, "He spake *a parable* unto them." St. Matthew also records these words of the Apostle Peter, "Declare unto us this *parable*," after our Lord had said, "Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man." It has been said, that although this is not strictly a parable, yet Peter "*took it* for a parable." But surely it is better with Peter to *take it* for a parable, than to eliminate it from the parables in order to suit a theory of definition.

On the whole, I desire to adopt in these pages the primary meaning of the word parable as admirably given by Mr. Trench. "*Παραβολή*, from *παραβάλλειν*, projicere, objicere, *i. e. τι τινί, to put forth one thing before or beside another;* and it is assumed when *παραβολή* is used for parable, though not necessarily included in the word, that the purpose for which they are set side by side is,

that they may be compared one with the other." This will include all the imagery of the New Testament as found in the teaching of our divine Master, whether we choose more exactly to *call* it allegory or proverb or parable. We shall have something that we can understand or comprehend, *set forth alongside* of that in which we are to be instructed—the former to illustrate and explain the latter; and whether these two are kept perfectly distinct as parallel lines, or touch one another at one point as in the contact of two globes—whether, in other words, the illustration and the thing illustrated, are kept apart, or partially blended with each other, we shall have the same blessed help afforded us to grasp at the "things which are not seen," by those wonderful analogies which were of old prepared by Him who in the days of his flesh, was pleased to display them so largely for our "instruction in righteousness."

Now as to the principle of interpretation adopted in this volume, it would be in vain to endeavor to enunciate any general rule. I trust I have observed—I am sure I have endeavored to do so—the following admirable suggestion of Tholuck—"It must be allowed that a similitude is perfect, in proportion as it is on all sides rich in application; and hence, in treating the parables of Christ, the exposition must proceed on the presumption, that there is import in every single point, and only desist from seeking it, when either it does not result without forcing, or when we can clearly see that this or that circumstance was merely added for the sake of giving intuitiveness to the narrative. We should not assume any thing to be non-essential, except when by holding it fast as essential the unity of the whole is marred and troubled."

In some of the parables, our Lord secures our full apprehension of them by a single sentence. Thus, for example "The wind bloweth where it listeth, &c., *so* is every one that is born of the Spirit." Here the key with its proper ward is put into our hands at once, and the whole lies open before us. In others again,

he rather hints at the meaning of the parable, than directly leads to it. As, for example, in that of the Dishonest Steward. Sometimes the Evangelist who reports the parable, prefaces it with what sets forth its scope and bearing, as in that of the Unrighteous Judge. Sometimes the preceding narrative itself directly suggests the purport of the parable which follows, as in those of the Lost Sheep, the Lost Piece of Money, and the Lost Son. Sometimes this must be gathered indirectly from the circumstances narrated, as in the parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard. In every one of these, however, the indications are never uncertain, by which the general scope of the parable may be discovered, and then in the working out of its details, the principle laid down by Tholuck, as above, ought to be strictly carried out.

Indeed, that principle is manifestly derived from a careful examination of those remarkable interpretations which our Divine Master has been pleased to give of two of his parables—the sower and the tares in the field. He appears to have left these in the Word of Truth as guides by which the careful student may feel his way when examining other parables also. The minuteness of detail in these interpretations is very striking. We have not only, as in that of the Tares in the field, an exact counterpart given in the explanation to all the leading points in the parable; but we have specially, as in that of the Sower, such exactness in detail, as that the "fowls of the air devouring the seed" sown "by the wayside," are meant to represent Satan "catching away the Word;" and the "thorns" to represent "the cares, riches, and pleasures of life which choke the word and make it unfruitful."

It is, indeed, surprising that with such *patterns* as these of explained parables, writers should be found who deny the propriety of any save the most general interpretation, and who see nothing in the elaborate details of some of them but a pleasing drapery to surround one central truth. It is a matter of thankfulness in the Church of God that a better and more consistent mode of exposi-

tion is becoming every day more manifest. Of course there is a danger in the opposite direction which must be carefully avoided. To give the rein to an unsanctified fancy, and to allow the imagination to run riot in these simple and beautiful parables, as if they were only stores of curious notions, is both disastrous to the individual who thus departs from the words of "truth and soberness," and most injurious to the cause of Christ in the world.

It is, however, in considering such dangers on both sides that our Lord's purpose in teaching by parables becomes manifest. It is to test the carnal and try the spiritual mind. The parable is not a "dark saying" in itself. It is, or it is not so, according to the state of the hearer's mind. It is from the latter that the darkness proceeds if it be not understood. It is because the mind has become spiritually quickened, if it be really apprehended. The very simplicity of the parable is that which causes the unsanctified mind to stumble at it, while, on the other hand, it wins and attracts the spiritual mind. And so it truly happens that "whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath." The spiritual mind will find in these precious words of Jesus such a rich and plenteous store as shall prove indeed to be inexhaustible, and the more he applies to it the more he will obtain; but the carnal heart, with no spiritual appetite, no desires after these great mysteries of the kingdom of God, will give so little heed to them, that, like the seed sown by the wayside, "even that which he hath shall be taken away."

A few words now as to the arrangement of the parables which I have followed in this volume. I have for many years felt, that in order to obtain a full impression of the extent and depth of our Lord's parabolic teaching, we must place his parables along side of each other, and so endeavor to shed the light of one upon

the other. I was quite sure that it could only be in this way that two very important points could be established; *first*, the very wide field of truth embraced in them; and *next*, how worthless and unfounded the slanderous statements of those are who regard many of them as mere repetitions of the same truth, clothed in a variety of garb.

In carefully examining them with this view, I have been penetrated with the deepest admiration at the rich profusion with which all the great objective and subjective truths of the Gospel are found scattered throughout these parables. I could not but observe how all the deepest and clearest impressions of Divine truth that can be experienced in the human heart, are, under God, imperceptibly wrought in by means of these "wondrous things out of his law." I could not but remark that the strength and reality with which the spiritual mind is enabled by grace to apprehend the deep, abstract doctrines of the Gospel, are owing, unconsciously indeed, to the inner reception of those glorious analogies, which, like the ladder in Jacob's dream, connect the things of earth with the things of heaven.

Nor was this admiration lessened, when I considered that those "earthly things" were not selected at random, as a mere man might do, in order to illustrate his teaching; and that, perhaps, after all, some more apt and suitable illustration might have been found. On the contrary they are furnished by one, who himself *prepared* these earthly things for this highest and best of ends, that they might be witnesses to the deeper things of spiritual and heavenly truth. I found that if, on the one hand, the perceptions of the child of God are cleared and elevated regarding the God of all grace in his spiritual kingdom by such simple things as the growth of a seed, or the union of the branches with the vine, or the relation of a father to his son—on the other hand, the gracious foresight of God in his *providence* becomes more exceedingly glorious, in that he has not only prepared in the king-

dom of nature what was needful for the support and comfort of his creatures there, but has so pre-ordained and fashioned and arranged these very things, that they should prove, not at random, but of necessity, most perfectly suitable to train up the child of earth in the knowledge of the language of heaven.

Whether in the plan I have adopted in this volume, I shall succeed in conveying similar impressions to the reader to those I have received myself, I can not tell. This must be left in His hands, who has all hearts at His diposal. But this will, I think, be admitted, even on a cursory glance, that nothing can exceed the importance of the subjects which it contains.

I have first of all brought together into one *Part*, all those parables which have specially and expressly to do with the kingdom of darkness, both in regard to the ruler of that kingdom and his subjects. I have formed these also into separate groups, so as more prominently to show their mutual dependence upon one another, and thus bring out their depth and fullness.

In the *next* Part, I have collected and arranged in such order as seemed most appropriate, all those precious parables which directly and expressly illustrate the person and character of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the *third* Part, I have brought together those parables which have special reference to the practical and experimental work of grace in the heart of the sinner—the soul's inner history, when it is passing, and has passed from the kingdom of Satan to the kingdom of God's dear Son.

In the *fourth* Part, I have gathered together the parables which give a full and accurate description of the reception and progress of the Gospel in the world.

In the *fifth*, I have brought together those which relate to the great change from the Jewish dispensation to that of the Gentiles.

And in the *last* there will be found those which expressly refer to the second coming of Christ.

It will be seen that I have dwelt longest upon the first three Parts in proportion to the rest. Specially is this the case in those parables which directly testify of the person and character of Christ, and in those of the Lost Sheep, the Lost Piece of Money, and the Lost Son, because I am sure that it is in the earnest and prayerful study of these, that deeper insight is to be gained into all the rest. While in one respect they are so profound, as to challenge unwearied examination, and to yield ever-increasing freshness of truth—on the other they are so simple, that they may be regarded as the elementary portion of the parables.

Of course, I need hardly remark, that the illustration of a parable is not a *proof* of divine truth. The *proof* of the great truths of Scripture must be looked for in the dogmatic teaching of the word of God. When this is done, however, then the illustration becomes a most important agent, in giving precision, force, and clearness, to our perception of the truth already proved. It presents itself more as a picture or engraving to the eye, while the direct teaching of the word of God falls upon the ear; but from this very circumstance it gives a form, reality, and lucidity to our thoughts, which they could never otherwise attain.

It only remains, then, that I commit this volume to Him of whose precious life-giving words it seeks alone to testify. May He make use of it for His glory. None can be more sensible of its numerous defects than I am myself. I have no wish to extenuate these. I have given much labor to it, in the midst of many pressing duties, but I can truly say that it has been labor which has brought its own immediate reward, and I would gladly undergo tenfold more for the priceless joy which it has administered.*

* It is not easy to over-estimate the excellencies of much of Mr. Trench's book on the parables, to which I have had occasion frequently to refer in preparing this volume. It is a work characterized not only by profound learning, but by a manly and healthy tone of feeling. While saying this, however, I must guard myself against being supposed to identify myself with his views on many essential points. On the contrary, I am constrained to differ from him very widely.

MONTPELIER, *December*, 1854.

THE

PARABOLIC TEACHING OF CHRIST.

PART I.

MAN IN SATAN'S KINGDOM—HIS CONDITION—HIS ACTINGS AND HIS PROSPECTS.

CHAPTER I.

THAT WHICH DEFILETH A MAN—THE LIGHT OF THE BODY—THE SICK.

REVELATION makes known to us the existence of two kingdoms: the one utterly unclean, the other perfectly pure;—the one all darkness, the other all light;—sin and eternal death in the one, holiness and eternal life in the other. In the first, Satan rules supreme, and his subjects are his victims. In the second, Christ is King, and his subjects are his friends.

To one of these kingdoms every human being in his natural condition belongs;—into the other there is no possible entrance for any man, except that natural condition be radically changed. Of the first he must be a subject, because he is born in sin;—of the second, if he ever becomes a subject, it is alone by the grace of God through Jesus Christ, and being "born again."

The Word of God does not reveal these things merely to stir up our curiosity, or to gratify it when raised; on the contrary, it unfolds deep and solemn mysteries concerning these kingdoms, with the wise and loving purpose, that we should make immediate and full use of the knowledge conveyed to us, and "flee from the wrath to come."

And herein lies the secret of "hearing and understanding" God's Word. If we search into it as a "common" and not a sacred thing,—if we gaze at it with the proud and self-sufficient

expectation of being able to fathom its depths, instead of looking into it with the docility of a child, feeling as well as saying, "What I know not, teach Thou me,"—then assuredly God will hide himself from us, "our feet will stumble on the dark mountains, and when we look for light, God will turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness."

But if, on the contrary, we sit like Mary at Jesus' feet, and "hear his word," then not only will that Master's Word be fulfilled in us, "To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God," but there shall also be such productiveness in this knowledge, that we shall, in our every-day experience, realize more fully what He meant when He said, "Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly."

Nor will this abundance spring from one portion of God's Word and not from another. It will arise from the whole. He who is enabled to say with David, "My soul is athirst for God," finds refreshment in every page of Scripture. History, prophecy, precepts, promises,—the shadows of the Old Testament, the substance of the New,—the Law of Moses, and the Gospel of Christ,—the Psalms of David, the Proverbs of Solomon, the miracles and the parables of Jesus,—all these, not apart, but mutually reflecting each other's light, are made to yield so fully and abundantly to him, that he is able "with joy to draw water from the wells of salvation."

In reviewing the various parables of our Lord, this shall, under the Divine blessing, be our aim—not merely to discover the special beauty of these very precious things of the Word, simple as they are, but also to use them as a lens of such fitness and power, that all other portions of Revelation may have their rays of light concentrated on our minds, and their warmth directed into our hearts; or, stretching them around us, in one grand panoramic view, be thus enabled to gather more distinctness to the Manual of Truth in our hands, and have the remembrance of its "lively oracles" more deeply engraven upon our memories.

We at once, then, pass to the consideration of those parables which present before us the sad, degraded, and perilous condition of man as a subject and victim of Satan in the kingdom of darkness. The first which meets us gives us the key to the mystery of his being in that kingdom at all.

"*Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.*"—Matt. xv. 11.

"*There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man.*"—Mark vii. 15.

Of the two Evangelists, the latter gives the parable in its simplest form; the former partly mixes the interpretation with it. The main purport of it is very clear. As regards man's body, it is not the nourishment which is provided for him and which he takes, that defiles him. It is important to notice how this truth, as representing a deeper spiritual one, is clearly enforced in Scripture. The distinction between clean and unclean animals in the Law of Moses—between that which might and that which might not be eaten—has nothing to do with the present view of the matter. God chose, for certain definite purposes, to make such distinction in a dispensation which was both ceremonial and transitory; but his doing so did not in the least imply that there was any thing inherently unclean in those animals that were forbidden, and which of necessity would therefore defile the body. On the contrary, we find distinct statements to guard against such an erroneous notion. Thus Peter is warned, when his Jewish prejudice revolted against the mingling of clean and unclean, as they appeared before him in vision, that whatever God might have been pleased to do in the former dispensation for a set purpose then, he must not turn away from any creature which, in His providence, he set before his servant now,—"That call not thou common,"* or unclean. And so in this sense Paul says to the Romans, "I know and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean *in itself*."† And to the same effect, only more pointedly, in writing to Timothy, "For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving."‡ It is not that what man receives as nourishment which defiles him bodily. Our Lord, in proceeding to enforce the grand spiritual truth which he had in view, declares the contrary,—"That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man."§ And then he at once applies this to the great fountain and source of spiritual defilement, of which all that he had said of the body and its food was but a figure.

* Acts x. 15. † Romans xiv. 14. ‡ 1 Tim. iv. 4. § Mark vii. 20.

"For from within out of the heart of man, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness; all these evil things come from within, and defile the man." This is the application of the parable. See what it unfolds. Of course, the first and most obvious conclusion is that which condemned the self-righteous Pharisee for being rigidly careful not to sit down to meat with unwashen hands, while he neglected to look to the cleansing of the source of all pollution within himself. "To eat with unwashen hands defileth not the man." But our Lord, as his wont was, is not satisfied with shutting the mouth of the gainsayer, he likewise takes occasion to preach a deep truth, and unfold a sad mystery. His application of the figure before us, when extended, is to the following effect:—No spiritual nourishment which God has provided for the soul of man defiles it. From whatever quarter the evil has sprung up which pollutes and destroys him, he has not had it instilled into him by God. It has not come to him in the spiritual sustenance which God has provided for him. No! It has sprung up in his own heart. It has originated within. Man has himself given birth to what defiles him. He has none to blame but himself. "From *within, out of the heart of man*, proceed evil thoughts," etc.

What a field of sad reflection does this open before us of the commencement of evil in this world! It leaves the question as to the *origin* of evil just where it must ever remain, among the hidden and unrevealed things of God. It affords us no help in the merely curious inquiry, why evil was ever permitted at all. But *this practical* question it does settle. It tells us *where* evil originated in *our* world. It tells us, that if, on the one hand, God made man upright, man made himself vile,—that there was nothing in all God's arrangements for man's spiritual necessities but those that were "very good," and that it was alone from *within* the heart that a polluted stream began to well up, which has from age to age enlarged itself in the defilement, desolation, and misery, it has never ceased to spread on every side.

And surely in this matter there has been more attributed to Satan in the bringing in of evil into this world than of right belongs to him. And thus, too, the words of our Lord, "The prince

of this world cometh, and hath nothing *in me*," fail to suggest the real nature of the contrast between Him and our first parents. The enemy came to Christ, and found nothing in him—not a single spot on which he could, with his utmost skill and deadly malice, plant one temptation, so as to make success even possible. He came to Eve, and he *did* find already there such a vantage-ground. That this was not, and could not be, the mere fact that it was possible for her to fall, is obvious, because this peculiarity in her being was God's doing, not hers,—but it was something which she herself had prepared,—a door which she herself had opened, and which *admitted* the breath of temptation,—a stand-point, which she herself had furnished, on which the adversary might now, with advantage, press his temptation and finally prevail. Does not our Lord, in the first of the deadly things enumerated in his application of this parable, point out what this vantage-ground for Satan was—"evil thoughts?" Look at the history of the fall. See how the tempter approaches Eve,—"Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree?* He does not speak of the one forbidden tree directly, or as if starting a *new* subject of thought for his victim; on the contrary, the very language of the temptation seems to imply that he is merely falling in with what had already begun to move within Eve's breast. She had doubtless already, in however slight a degree, begun to look at the tree with desire, to wonder at the prohibition—probably to question its justice. *Her* "evil thought" it was, and not Satan's subtilty or power, which shivered the fair image of God—admitted the "father of lies," where truth should have been forever enshrined, and was the first foul speck in a stream which has ever since polluted this world with all manner of uncleanness. And this accords with the statement of James, who traces this stream to its right source,—"But every man when he is tempted, is drawn away of *his own lust*, and enticed. Then, when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."† The same apostle likewise seems almost to have had the words of Christ in his mind, for he thus strongly describes the things which come *out of the mouth*,—"The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course

* Genesis iii. 1. † James i. 14, 15.

of nature; and it is set on fire of hell."* The heart provides fuel for the tongue, for "out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh," and "it is set on fire of hell," and involves all around in a terrible and wide-spread conflagration. "It setteth on fire the course of nature." See then what the parable portrays to us. It points to the heart of man as the prolific source of all the evil with which we are acquainted in this world; and, moreover, it shows that evil within must soon be poured out. The "evil treasure" must "bring forth evil things." The tongue becomes the channel by which the pent up waters first break forth, and as they gush out, a deeper tinge than ever man has imparted, distinguishes them. Hell has lent her unutterable deadliness to this corrupt and corrupting stream.

We have this sad history further illustrated by another parable, taken, as that we have just considered, from the human body, and exhibiting another phase of the evil condition of man, as a subject in the kingdom of darkness. His "foolish heart" led him in, and then that "foolish heart became darkened."

"*The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!*"—Matt. vi. 22, 23; Luke xi. 34.

Here the eye is called the "*Light of the body*," or the lamp of the body; not, let it be observed, as if the eye were itself the originator of light, but merely as the reflector of that light which is diffused around the body, and altogether independent of it. Now, if the eye be "*single*," or clear, the whole body has the benefit of it, and "walks in light." On the other hand, if the eye be *evil*, diseased, or perverted, it ceases to be a faithful guide and the body becomes to all intent and purposes "*full of darkness*," and "stumbles at noonday" as at midnight.

But, what the eye is to the body, the conscience, or the inner light, is to the soul. It has not, and never was intended to have light in itself; but its office is to reflect the pure light of the Father of Spirits, which is altogether independent of it. Had this conscience remained "*single*," clearly and fully reflecting this supernal light, then the whole soul would have remained

* James iii. 6.

"*full of light*," both in its affections and in its faculties. It would have felt, that nothing was so satisfying as the love and the favor of God; and all truth, physical, moral, intellectual, and spiritual, would have been revealed before its gaze, with a luster over which no dimness could ever fall—with a certainty which could never fail. But, alas! this inner light became evil. Conscience lost its power of being the great reflector of God's light on the soul, and so reason and judgment, as well as affection, became thoroughly darkened or perverted. The loveliness and the glory of God's character are no longer perceived, and so the "beauty of holiness" is unseen. Errors, mistakes, stumbling, falling, and ruin, mark the soul's onward progress. Darkness is put for light, and bitter for sweet. The simplest and the plainest things become complicated and inextricable. Even the great truths of external nature are of no avail in giving it a right direction, because they are not seen in that harmony and proportion, in that position and relationship, which can alone be discovered when the true spiritual light of Him, who is at once the God of nature and of grace, is fully shining on the heart.

Our Lord adds further, "*If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!*" If, for the use of the body, its comfort and its safety, it was needful to prepare so delicate and wondrous an organ as the eye, then, should the power of vision fail, how great must that darkness be!—how extensive—shrouding the whole body in its pall—and that not at one time, or at another, but at all times. So, likewise, if for the guidance, the safety, and the comfort of the soul, it was needful to place within its inmost folds, so delicate and marvelous a mirror of God's light, or, in other words, of God himself, by the aid of whose wondrous properties *alone*, his image, his truth,—He Himself, could be seen, felt, appreciated, and according to its capacity understood by the soul,—how great must be the soul-darkness, when that mirror is broken in pieces and its light gone! Every part becomes dark. The minute but light-conveying organ of the soul is destroyed, and each one of those countless wonders which compose that inner mystery is wrapped in thick darkness. Each chamber in that marvelous dwelling, which before was all light, is shut up and dark. The darkness of it is indeed "great." Nor is there any hope of change. It is not such a darkness as is

succeeded, first by the dawn, and then by the bright noon-day,—it never gathers brightness, but blackness. As well might we expect to be able to see with the hand or with the ear, as that the great and gross darkness of the soul should, by any of its inner powers, be turned even to twilight, when the lamp of the soul is gone out.

But we proceed to another parable, taken from the human body, and which presents to us a further view of the sad condition of man in the kingdom of Satan.

"*They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.*"—Matt. ix. 12.

Here is another apt and striking illustration of man's present condition. Bodily sickness sets forth what neither of the parables we have yet considered does. In the first of these, we have distinctly intimated to us, *whence* the evil stream of pollution first sprang in this world, viz., the heart. In the second, we have gross, total darkness, both mental, moral, and spiritual, as the result of a darkened conscience. Here we have the debility and weakness of man portrayed, and the rapidity with which, if the inner disease be not arrested, he is falling into eternal death. In the first parable we have sin itself first rearing its head in this world, and then pouring forth its deadly waters. In the second we have it covering the soul with the shadow of death. And now in that before us, we have the soul, in its departure from God, and its solitary darkness, sinking down in weakness and mortal disease into the arms of the second death. How terrible is the full description of this disease as given us by the inspired Prophet,—"From the soul of the foot, even to the head, there is no soundness in it, but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores." What a loathsome thing to look upon! What a wretched thing to be!

Very striking is this image of sickness to mark the prostrate condition of man in his sin. He droops and languishes under its influence. He is disabled by its enervating effects from walking abroad in his vigor, running without weariness, or walking without faintness. That which in a sinless state would be easy, delightful, and refreshing, becomes impossible and distasteful to his sin-sick soul. How often has the poor afflicted sufferer, in his chamber of sickness, felt bitterly the change in his every

feeling which that sickness has induced? The light and the breath of nature—the sights and the sounds which gladdened and cheered him before, have become almost intolerable to him. The very voice of affection itself—the very tone of gentlest love, in seeking to soothe, are no longer what they were. The feverish restlessness—the longing for the morning dawn, and then for the evening shade—the parched tongue, the weary limbs, the acute pain, the dull deep gnawing of mortal disease, the disarrangement of all the functions of the body, the sleeplessness, the delirium, the helplessness, the hopelessness, and the *solitariness* of the poor-stricken one, (for his bodily disease is his own—he shares it not with another—the health or the sickness of all the world besides makes no difference to him; he bears his own burden;)—surely all this supplies a wonderful picture of sin in the soul of man, and the spiritual disease under which he is suffering. The malady, doubtless, has its acute and chronic stage. Sometimes a mitigation of symptoms occurs for a time. Now and then, it may be, the sufferer is able to breathe the fresh air, or move with less difficulty; but the disease is still there, and ever ready to assert its full power.

And then, what is the close to sickness of body? Look into that chamber! Gaze into that dark grave! The end of it is death. And so to the soul, when disease commences there, it is mortal. "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." And if the progress of the disease be, in other words, but a gradual dying, the end thereof is eternal death. Alas, there is a mystery here beyond the illustration! The poor body lies *still* in the grave, when death has closed the scene of earthly suffering; but the soul that has sunk under the fatal power of mortal disease in this world, has but winged its way from lesser suffering to such agony as this,—"Where their worm dieth not, and their fire is never quenched."

CHAPTER II.

THE STRONG MAN ARMED.—THE UNCLEAN SPIRIT GOING OUT OF A MAN.

In the preceding chapter we have seen vividly portrayed how man entered the kingdom of darkness. His heart cherished the "evil thought," and so he passed across the line which separates the kingdoms of light and darkness. His condition in the latter is, *first*, one of intellectual, moral, and spiritual darkness. He has become adapted to his new position. And next, he has a "sickness unto death," inflicting on him from within himself all kinds of spiritual distress and misery here, and filling him with the gloomy forebodings of the disease consummated hereafter.

And here, then, another agent appears distinctly on the scene, and henceforth occupies a most important and prominent position there. He has as yet only been seen, as it were, to cross man's path. His presence has only been obscurely intimated. His mighty shadow alone has fallen on man, and darkened him in his once fair home. Now he stands clearly revealed. We behold him in his pride of conquest and his power of dominion. The foul tempter, the false deceiver, the ruthless destroyer, the accuser and the tyrant of fallen man. The following parable brings this evil one under our notice:—

"*Or else, how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house.*"—Matthew xii. 29; Mark iii. 27.

"*When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armor wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils.*"—Luke xi. 21, 22.

The figure which is the groundwork of this parable is very

simple. We have a dwelling, and that not a common one. It is a place of strength, capable of withstanding an assault, and, at the same time, of grand and imposing appearance—it is *a fortress* and *a palace*. It is inhabited. The dweller in it, not the rightful possessor of it, is a "*strong man*," one of power and nerve, suited to the business he has in hand, namely, to hold securely the palace in which he lives. For this purpose he has all suitable armor, so as to make the strongest and the longest resistance against any attack; and so far as his skill and ability enable him, he "*keeps his palace*," and his "*goods are in peace*." The rest of the similitude we defer, until we examine into the meaning of that part of the picture.

As to the "*strong man*," there can be no doubt. The context clearly shews us that it is "the chief of the devils," Satan, the great rebel against God, and the great adversary of man. What then is his palace? There is very probably in the parable a general allusion to the world at large, as the place of Satan's power, and the seat of his dominion, and this is needful to be had in remembrance, and will fall to be considered at another time; but it is manifest that our Lord was not dwelling primarily on this general view. He had been engaged in casting out devils from individuals, each sufferer being possessed with one or more of these evil spirits. His enemies charged him with doing so by the aid of Satan himself. Our Lord rebuts this charge, and that in a short but very significant parable,—"*If a kingdom*," he says, "*be divided against itself, that kingdom can not stand*." If there be nothing in a kingdom but divided council and separate action, making on one side, and unmaking on the other, setting up and pulling down, internal discord and civil war, "*that kingdom can not stand;*" and if "Satan be also divided against himself," as the Pharisees intimated, when they accused Jesus of casting out Satan by Satan's own power, "how could his kingdom stand?" No. He is not so weak, so ignorant of what his strength is, nor so reckless of his resources. His bad power is yet a *united* power, and it will not be for lack of oneness of purpose and action that his kingdom shall at length fall. Then our Lord likens him to "*the strong man keeping his palace*." Obviously, therefore, the case of those who were possessed with devils * supplied primarily the matter to

* See Appendix A.

be illustrated in the parable. When an evil spirit dwelt in Mary Magdalene, in the Gentile woman's daughter, or in the fierce maniac among the tombs, then we have brought before us in its nearest, most palpable, and terrible reality, the "*strong man keeping his palace.*" But, after all, the dominion which these spirits had over the bodies of the poor sufferers, was but indicative of the power which they possessed over their souls. And is it not probable, that besides the purpose of exhibiting, during our Lord's sojourn on earth, before the eyes of all, his power over Satan, so that "He cast forth the devils by a word," he might have permitted such terrible evidence of their presence and power in the body, to draw attention to the deeper, more solemn, and more awful truth of their presence in the soul?

That Scripture teaches this "dread reality," can not be denied. The case of Ananias is one convincing proof,—"Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?" * What is this but the possession of the heart by Satan? He holds every nook and corner of it,—he *fills* it. The case of Judas is another, and, in one respect, even more striking. In the betrayal of his Master, we are informed by the Evangelist, first of all, that the "devil put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him." He must possess the heart, who can at his will, introduce such a deadly intent. But this is not all. A little further on we are let in to the full amount of the terrible power and dominion which Satan has over the heart of fallen man,—"After the sop, Satan *entered* into him." † The sinner's soul is a place at his command. He has the keys of the door, and can go in and out at his pleasure. He is its powerful possessor, its stern guard, and dark king.

And in the parable before us, then, we see this soul-possession by the evil one wonderfully portrayed. The dwelling which he holds is no common one. It was originally built for strength and for beauty. The soul of man has indeed changed masters, and every power and every ornament it contains has been transferred from God to Satan; nevertheless there they are. It is a stronghold still. Is it not so? Mark its resistance against all good; its resolute and successful shutting out of all spiritual light. It is a palace still; for though the King of kings is no longer there, its very possession has given a kingdom to a fallen angel;

* Acts v. 3. † John xiii. 27.

and as long as he retains it, he lifts himself up against the God of Heaven, and dares to make war as "the prince" and "the god of this world," against Jehovah and his saints.

And does not this very truth just stated shew admirably the choice of our Lord's similitude? "*The strong man.*" He must needs be strong,—he has proved himself to be strong, who has not only entered in, but now holds in complete subjection such a dwelling as this, such a fortress, such a palace. Satan "works in the children of disobedience," and that so constrainingly that they are called his "children." He "carries them captive at his will," and "the whole world lieth in the wicked one." The "strength" of this usurper in the King's palace is well seen by the apostolic description of the terrific conflict which must be waged, if the soul shall ever escape. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

But observe further; when the strong man keeps his palace, he has "*his goods*" in it, and they are "*in peace.*" These are the lusts and passions of the poor fallen soul; all those wondrous faculties which once followed hard after God, but are now alienated from him, degraded by reason of the vileness of the objects on which they now fasten,—these are Satan's "*goods.*" He, the fallen angel, has reached that awful depth so vividly painted by the poet, as to say, "Evil, be thou my good." The deeper the guilt, the more deadly the sin;—the more atrocious the iniquity, it is the more prized by him. These are the things which he most carefully guards and watches over; and as long as he remains in possession of the soul, they are "*in peace,*"—he allows nothing to mitigate their abomination, or change their character.

And then he has his armor wherewith to do all this,—his panoply, his whole armor, or "*all his armor,*" as it is called, —his snares, guiles, temptations,—his subtle suggestions, stirring up evil by supplying food for it, awaking doubts against God, and truth, and holiness, and Heaven, and leading on an outward and bitter opposition against all that is good. This is "*the armor wherein he trusteth,*" and which, alas, has done him, and is still doing him such service in deluding and ensnaring the souls of men, and driving them to utter and irremediable ruin.

But let us turn now to consider the remaining part of this parable. What is set before us is this: A strong man, dwelling in his fortified palace, and holding all his goods in peace by his skill and power, well armed, and on his guard. Then a "*stronger than he*" is introduced, and by reason of his superior strength, the latter forces his way into the palace, "*comes upon*" the strong man, "*overcomes him*," "*binds him*," "*takes from him all his armor wherein he trusteth*," and "*divides his spoils.*"

Here, then, we have the history of a severe conflict, and a complete victory. For the present we pass over the consideration as to who "*the stronger than he*" is, because another opportunity will occur when we may more fully and suitably take this up, and look into the precious truths which are involved in it; suffice it just now to remark, that the "*goods*" of the "*strong man*" are "*in peace*," and his palace safe, as long as a stronger than he does not come against him. His hold on the property will never become weakened, impaired, or destroyed by any internal cause. The loss of his palace and his spoils together will never happen to the strong man from any want of care, forethought, skill, or unity of purpose on his part, nor from the perfect fitness of all that he has taken possession of within for his purpose. It is only superior force that can at length lead this "captivity captive." So with the soul of man domineered over as it is by Satan; there is no help for it, no hope for its deliverance, from any thing which may happen within itself. Satan's hold of this soul-property will never be relaxed by carelessness or want of vigilance on his part,—he is ever on the alert, "going about" to see that "*his goods are in peace*,"—he is never "divided against himself;" no ingenuity or subtilty are wanting on his part; no willingness or power are lacking to hold his own; nor is there any thing in the poor captive soul itself whence hope of deliverance from this thraldom can arise. Alas, it is a "willing captive;" it "loves darkness rather than light;" it has acquired a deadly affinity to that evil one who has taken possession of it. It "walks *according* to the prince of the power of the air," and if it be not "recovered out of the snare of the devil," the notes of that awful harmony shall never die away; their "wailing" shall startle the echoes of eternity.

But that there is a way of deliverance, the parable clearly

makes known. Satan, indeed, will never of his own accord, by his carelessness, or by internal weakness, give up his victim; nor will that victim ever, of its own accord, make any effort to dislodge Satan. Unless some one else interfere, the terrible union between the evil one and the soul is sealed forever. But if "*the stronger*" than Satan takes the matter in hand—one who fears him not, who will not stoop to craft in contending with him, who will not be content with a drawn battle, who takes him not unawares, but announces to him his determined purpose and his sure work, then the bands of the wicked are broken—nothing can any longer keep Satan and the soul together as lord and slave—as sovereign and subject. *Power*, irresistible power, dissolves the compact, severs the union, and destroys the dominion. The steps by which this great deliverance is effected, and the final victory secured to the "*stronger*," are well worthy of notice. He (the stronger) enters into the soul, he "*comes upon*" the usurper there, falls upon him in his might, "*overcomes*" him, grasps him by a hand which is "mighty to save," "*binds*" him hand and foot, makes him a captive in the very place where hitherto he reigned supreme, exhibits him to the awakened and delivered soul in this state of bondage, "*takes from him his armor*," makes the wondering soul fully aware of his subtilties, and unmasks the secrets of his power, so that it is no longer "ignorant of his devices," and "*divides the spoil*,"—recovers all those powers and faculties of the soul, which before only sounded as voices from the pit, and tunes them to the melodies of heaven, at one time causing them to burst forth in the grand swell of victory gained over the tyrant, at another to join in the new song of praise, with all its sweet cadences of unutterable joy.

Thus only can the soul be effectually delivered from Satan; nothing can do it but the overwhelming strength of one altogether distinct from the spoiler and the spoiled. This most important truth, which does indeed require to be deeply impressed upon the heart of man, has not alone drawn forth the parable we have just been considering. That illustration is in itself remarkable for its clear and distinct teaching; but, as if to remove any possible doubt or cause for mistake in the matter, our Lord has left us another parable, which fastens this nail in a sure place. Let us give our attention to it.

"*When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first.*"—Matthew xii. 43–45; Luke xi. 24–26.

The similitude in this parable, though interpenetrated with that which it is intended to illustrate, is still obvious enough. We have set before our minds a house—not now as in the former parable, either a place of strength, or a palace, but simply a dwelling. It has a possessor, one who occupies it at his pleasure. He calls it "*my* house." He leaves his dwelling for a time, of his own accord. He has not a moment's thought of relinquishing his property. He goes out of it for a little while, and journeys according to his will. When he becomes wearied with his wanderings, he turns his face homewards, and when he enters his dwelling again, he finds it, as he expected, perfectly ready for his reception, "empty, swept, and garnished;" and the only change from his former life in his dwelling is, that he has introduced others, his associates, with himself into it, welcomed them under his roof, and made them share in his habitation.

Such is the groundwork of this parable. There is no doubt that our Lord meant it to have, in a secondary sense, a reference to the Jewish people of that day, "so shall it be also to the men of this generation," and to this view of the parable our attention will yet be directed; but the deeper truth lies beneath that interpretation. The very manner in which our Lord has mingled the truth and the illustration together proves this. "When the unclean spirit," he says, "is gone out of a man." If we extend this, it will read thus, "when like a man going out of his own house, the unclean spirit is gone out of a man,"—an evil spirit, then, *going out of a man*, is the first and main point of illustration in this parable. And this, then, just throws us back upon the conclusion which we reached above, namely, that while our Lord was immediately pointing to the possession of the bodies of men by evil spirits, he had chiefly and specially in view the possession of their souls.

Let us see, then, what instruction the parable yields to us in

this respect. "When the unclean spirit *is gone out* of a man." There is nothing here of a "stronger than he" coming upon him and binding him; rather the language suggests to us the strongest contrast between this case and those in which our Lord openly interposed and "*cast forth*" the devils by his word.

We have then set forth here the utter hopelessness of deliverance for the soul from the bondage of Satan, unless a third party step in, and by his power dissolve the union forever. The heart of man will not recover from its guilt, or its real concord with Satan, notwithstanding the temporary absence of the latter, and the withdrawal for a season of his direct temptations. It is not the mere departure of the evil one for a season that will deliver it from his thraldom, or change its nature, and renew it into the image of God. The tyrant knows this full well, or he would never withdraw his active temptations even for a moment. He deliberately lets the poor soul alone at times, not because he has become careless of his possession, but because he feels secure in the hold he has obtained over it. During his voluntary but temporary absence, he never ceases to regard it as "*his house*," and means to return to it when he pleases. And just like the man who leaves his dwelling for a time, and turns his steps whithersoever he will, so the evil spirit, when he leaves a soul alone for a time, without the immediate presence of temptations, chooses to "*walk through dry places*,"—those barren and sterile places, where he finds what is suited to his taste, where he can devour, destroy or deceive, and leave the traces of his deadly poison at every step. Wherever the grace of God is not, he finds "*a dry place*," and he tarries there, if it be only as a wayfaring man at an inn for his refreshment, to gratify his own deadly passion for doing evil to the bodies and souls of those who are exposed to his baleful influence.

What a glimpse into the state of these spirits of darkness does the single expression used by our Lord give us! The evil spirit wanders through dry places, "*seeking rest*." Alas! the worm gnaws—the fire burns—the scorpion stings, and the accursed one flies from one act of deadly spite to another, in eager desire to dull the pain, and calm the restless tumult within. But all in vain; all his efforts only add fuel to the flame. The curse follows him at every step. The chain of darkness is riveted more

tightly around him. His "hell enlarges itself without measure." Oh, if there is one view of the terrific effect of sin and departure from God more awful than another, it is surely this bitter restlessness of evil, which thrusts the miserable being who has it into fresh acts of defiance and ungodliness, only to increase the intolerable amount of disquietude and anguish forever. Truly these words might well be written on the gates of the pit, "*seeking rest, and finding none*," for they but too fully account for the sounds that issue from within, "weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth."

Wearied with his wanderings through the dry places, the evil spirit determines at length to return on his steps, and to dwell again in the heart he had for a time left. How sad the picture is of his entire confidence in holding fast his possession. "*I will return unto my house from whence I came out.*" And when he does so, "*he finds it empty, swept, and garnished.*" It is "*empty.*" This is the key-note of the description. There is no one to dispute his entrance, or to claim possession of the property. In his absence the door has not been opened to another master, nor have the rooms been occupied by another tenant. The soul, though it has not seen its possessor as it were face to face for a time, has never abjured its allegiance, or turned its desire toward another. And so the evil one is pleased to find it "*swept.*" He is greatly satisfied with some appearances of reformation—certain significant tokens of cleanness, for he knows that these are all for him. Had it been swept or cleansed for another, he would have fled from it with dismay and hatred, but as it is for himself, he exults over it with fiendish delight, as only making the habitation at length more thoroughly his own—and it is "*garnished*" too. Many ornaments are found within. The soul has put forth some of its inherent powers. It has enriched itself from the stores of art, science and philosophy. It has shewn rare skill in works of social benevolence. It has gained a good name for integrity and uprightness. And all this, too, is gain to the evil possessor, not to the rightful owner of it. All these he takes into his hand, and turns them to his own bad purpose of keeping the soul still further from God, and making use of it for the enlargement and increase of the dominion and the power of darkness.

It is very remarkable to note the bearing of the parable at this point. "*Then goeth he, and taketh with him seven other spirits more*

wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there, and the last state of that man is worse than the first." He first finds the soul "*empty*," and not only so, but "*swept*" and "*garnished;*" and this latter far from giving him any disquiet, as if he were losing his hold, only makes him perceive that there is henceforth room for much more than there was before. It is capable of containing more evil than before. It is ready to entertain more messengers of Satan than before; and so its last state is worse than the first.

It is surely impossible to mistake the solemn truth here illustrated. We have not here the case of one outwardly going on in a course of vile pollution and rampant ungodliness. In such as these the *unclean* spirit never even *seems* for a moment to relax his hold. Every day he appears to add a new accomplice in his work of ruin and woe, until it may be, as in the case of the dweller in the tombs, out of whom when the evil spirits passed, for they were legion, they entered into a whole herd of swine—the poor soul becomes, in the most terrible sense of the term, "a child of hell." But here we have the case of one, in whom outward appearances are favorable, and yet these very things, externally so fair and good, are turned by the power and subtilty of Satan into increased means of rebellion against God, and daring triumph of his evil and accursed sway. Surely the great lesson lies written as with a sunbeam on the parable, that as long as the soul is "*without God* in the world," no matter what it may be in other respects, in its outward manifestations, no matter what men may think of it, nor what it may think of itself, it is still the slave of sin, and the bond slave of Satan. The only possible change in its condition for the better and not for the worse, is when Satan is overpowered by the almighty strength of a greater than he. And simultaneously with this, the delivered soul is born again and made a new creature. Both of these acts, the one by the Son, the other by the Spirit of God, we shall notice at a future opportunity.

Meantime, dear reader, let me ask you to look and examine closely into the condition of your heart. Have you reason to fear that it is like the "dry places" of the parable, that you know nothing of the former and the latter rain of God's Spirit, which refreshes the thirsty ground of the heart, and makes the very wilderness bloom and blossom as the rose? Is this your case?

Take heed. It tempts evil spirits to seek you out. It is just in such states of the heart that they leave their traces. The dry places, which will not yield a blade of grass, may have fuel heaped upon them for the flame of lust. But perhaps you find much within that is fair and promising—much that pleases and gratifies yourself, and the manifestation of which gives you a name and reputation among others. But with all this, is your soul "*empty?*" It may be "*swept and garnished,*" but is God *there?* Have you invited him to sit down on the throne of your heart? Do all these lovely and loveable things, as you think them, cluster round him, as of right belonging to him? Is the perfume of all these sweet things, as you regard them, given forth for him? If not! then once more I entreat you,—beware! Satan lurks beneath that flower. The potency of his temptation arises in the very fragrance of the blossom. Your own *pride* of heart is deceiving you, as much as the pollution of your neighbor is deluding him; and even like Eve in Paradise, when you have turned away, as you suppose, from the serpent, and forgotten him,—and, it may be, the grandeur of being like a god knowing good from evil, fills you with exulting expectation, the flaming sword may even then be unsheathing which is to prevent your ever seeing again the tree of life; and, alas! your "*last state will be worse than the first.*"

CHAPTER III.

THE RICH FOOL.

We advance another step. We have already seen that it proceeded from the "evil thought" of man himself, that he became a subject in the kingdom of darkness. His condition in that kingdom we have traced as one of mental and spiritual darkness, and of mortal disease. We have likewise seen that he has thus sold himself to the prince of that kingdom,—Satan, who disposes of him as he will. We now turn to look for some of the external manifestations of all this, which must assuredly appear, as "the evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart," can only "*bring forth evil things.*" Indeed, it is by such outward manifestations that the real state of the case is known. "A good tree can not bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit." The good fruit is not the cause of the goodness of the tree on the one hand, nor is the evil fruit the cause of the badness of the tree on the other; but the one is thus distinguished from the other. "The tree is known by its fruit;" and so "the unfruitful works of darkness," as they may be seen and read of all men, are not the cause of man's unhappy and enslaved condition; but the necessary consequence, and the evidence of it; and it is by them, as with "a pen of iron and the point of a diamond," that the triumphs of sin and Satan are so clearly and enduringly recorded.

The first parable that meets us at this stage in our progress, is the following:

"*The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully; and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I*

will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there I will bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say unto my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?—Luke xii. 16–20.

Our Lord addressed the parable to those around him, in consequence of a very unseemly interruption, caused by a man who was standing by. Jesus, according to his custom, had been engaged in urging on the attention of his hearers some of those important truths which were all-essential, as well "for the life that now is as that which is to come,"—he was speaking "as never man spake," of some of the great spiritual things which man is so slow to understand, and yet which it is of eternal moment that he should receive, when one of the company, with his heart and thoughts wide of the mark, broke in upon his discourse. This man had no love for those higher and purer things of which Christ was speaking. He had no taste for those inner spiritual possessions which Jesus was urging on him as well as others. All that his carnal heart did for him was to assure him that there was one before him teaching as with authority. He marked the deference with which Christ was listened to. He concluded that he must have much weight and influence in any thing he might chose to say, and so he thought he had a notable opportunity to promote some purposes of his own—some selfish desires which he cherished deeply in his heart, to the entire exclusion of those better things which Christ set before him. "Master," said he, "speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me." Ah! this man spake out candidly what thousands feel, but prudently conceal. How many *hide* such thoughts within their hearts, which he openly expressed, at the very time when the most solemn truths of death, judgment, and eternity, are being pressed upon them!

And let it be noted that what this man desired was, not to gain an advantage over his brother, but merely to obtain a just and proper settlement at the hands of that brother. We shall miss very much the force of the parable we are to consider, if we do not bear this in mind. There is nothing wrong in itself implied in the narrative. There can be little doubt that this man had

been defrauded by his brother, and it is probable that, from the clear conviction of the justice of his case, combined with what he saw and heard of the purity and holiness of the Saviour's life and conduct, he was led to appeal to the latter as he did. It is not, then, that he asked any thing which was in itself sinful or improper. No; his guilt lay in this,—though not claiming any other property than his own, he was yet suffering earthly things to take the precedence of heavenly things, and so to obscure his vision, and fill his heart, that he had no care, or thought, or patience for the latter at all.

When thus interrupted, our Lord at once refuses, in very peremptory language, all such interference in worldly matters. "Man," said he, "who made me a judge or divider over you?"—words which can not fail to suggest to us the contrast between his conduct and that of Moses, when the latter, truly set as his heart was on executing the Divine commission with which he was intrusted, did yet most imprudently and unjustifiably seek to do this by ways and means, and on occasions when he was not specially directed by God.* Having thus pointedly refused to undertake the settlement of the matter this man would have thrust upon Him, our Lord seizes the opportunity of pressing some solemn and important truths on his hearers, connected with that carnal, earthly, sensual spirit, to which expression had just been given. And he clothes his sentiments in the remarkable parable before us.

"*The ground of a rich man brought forth plentifully.*"—We can not but note the reason why our Lord chose this as the means whereby the rich man became richer. Had he merely brought under our notice the case of a wealthy man adding daily to his already large stores, a wide margin would have been left to us to suppose that he had been doing this by unfair as well as fair means. The continued increase to his goods might possibly arise from craft, dishonesty, and fraud, on his part. But this was not involved in the matter our Lord had in hand. He was not aiming his rebuke against what is regarded as fraudulent between man and man. He was admitting that nothing of this kind existed, as in the case of the man who had just interrupted his discourse. What He had before Him was to illustrate the case of one who,

* Exodus ii. 11.

by no improper means, was increasing in riches, but who, as they increased, had "set his heart upon them," and neglected God. So he tells us that his fields brought forth plenteously. It was by rains, and sun, and fertile soil, by cold and heat, summer and winter, that the stores of this man were continually becoming greater. His wealth was not ill-gotten wealth, but the reverse. Nor must we omit to notice the contrast implied in the very selection of the imagery. The direct agency of God's providence is specially seen in such a case of outward prosperity. It is, so to speak, more marked than in many other ways whereby men become rich; and so the absorption of this man's mind and affection in the gift, and not in the Giver, comes all the more prominently forth.

Well, with this increase of prosperity, what does the rich man do? Does it open his heart? Reader, disregard not this turning-point in the parable. We might think that it is at the time when "riches are making to themselves wings," and departing from us, that we cling to them the most, and that when they are increasing we set the less store by them. Not so! The drying up of the springs of earthly prosperity is often accompanied by the opening of all the affections of the heart toward God, while the increase which God gives, not unfrequently shuts up the heart against himself. Just so is it set forth in the parable. The rich man, in his prosperity, did not try even to think how best to use the means, the talents God gave him; he did not sit down carefully to examine into his duty as a steward of these things; he did not look around him for fitting objects on which to spend his wealth. No! The increase was to be wholly for himself—for his own comfort and luxury. He will, therefore, pull down his barns and build greater. He will enlarge his expectations. These barns of his have been filled. Why should not greater? And then, when these latter are filled, their store will be all for *himself*.

And mark, it is not merely the thorough-going selfishness of man's carnal, sensual heart, which is here so vividly portrayed. The very expressions used serve to mark utter forgetfulness of his dependence on God—of Him from whom all that he possesses, or ever hopes to possess, must come. The fruits are "*my* fruits." He regards them quite as his own, and not given in trust to him by God. "*All my* fruits and *my* goods." This repetition of the

expression enforces this view still more emphatically. The heart of man in its self-love and self-seeking has just these two things before it unceasingly: the means of gratification, and the person to be gratified, that is himself. As to God, He is forgotten. He is not in all the worldling's thoughts. He who resembles this "rich man" takes care of *himself*, and what he calls *his* goods. He never loses sight of these two things. But he is "without God in the world."

Then again, as closely allied to this, see what the parable intimates to us. Not only does the rich man speak of the fruits which the earth has yielded as "*his* fruits;" but *he* likewise is the only party in his mind capable of devising or executing any plan by which these may be stored up, preserved, and kept ready at hand for future use. "*I* will" do this and that. *I* will pull down, and *I* will build up; and *I* will bestow my goods there, and so forth. These two things always dance attendance upon each other. The regarding the good things of this world as our own, without any reference to God at all, and our wretched confidence in ourselves that we are able to add to, to keep and "*bestow*" these things in all time coming.

But we have not yet done with this manifestation of selfish, godless humanity. This rich man, regarding all the goods of Providence as his own, and deliberating on their future safe possession and enjoyment, thus further communes with himself, "*I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years: take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.*" Note here, first, the fatal mistake of the human heart. "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years!" As if these good things,—these fruits and stores of earthly things, had any thing in common with the *soul*, so as to be capable of satisfying that. How grovelling is the very thought of the carnal heart, seeking to fill and satisfy the soul with these! Truly the prophet's words apply here,—"He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he can not deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?"* What a mockery it is to address the soul, whose food and sustenance alone can be the knowledge, love, and fear of God, in such terms as these; and yet it is just what thousands and thousands are doing practically every day. Every one in whom

* Isaiah xliv. 20.

is the love of the world plays this trick with his soul, and eagerly covets one thing or another, in the vain and delirious hope that he is laying up "*goods for his soul for many years.*"

Then notice further the utter sensuousness of this rich man's address to his soul. "*Take thine ease,*" or "rest thyself." This is indeed the earthling's thought for himself. "Rest thyself," in these "*goods*" of earth, and time, and sense. God speaks in his every act of providence, to say nothing of his word of grace, telling us that this is not, and never can be, the place of our rest,—that it is polluted,—that it will destroy us if we think so,—that we have no continuing city here; and that if we try to make one we shall only "sow the wind, and reap the whirlwind." And yet here is the universal language of the natural man. "Rest thyself here." One looks to this, another to that earthly couch on which he hopes to repose in peace and comfort. Each has his own earthly taste and worldly expectation; and, alas, what must be the result of this, but that they "lie down in sorrow?" As well might Lot have expected to rest in peace in Sodom, had he refused to accompany the messengers of the Lord out of it, as for any child of man to look for repose to his soul in the enjoyment of those things which perish in the using. Under every tempting flower there lurks a poisonous serpent, and the foolish heart which has sought its refreshment amid such treacherous things, will find itself pierced with many sorrows.

"*Eat, drink,*" says the rich man to his soul. This man not only expected ease and rest in the acquisition and safe-keeping of his goods, but he meant to have great self-indulgence by means of them. He would procure the choicest viands,—he would, like another rich man, in another parable, "fare sumptuously every day." This would form a very important feature in his existence. It would fill a large portion of his time. It would make an essential item in his happiness and soul-satisfaction, this eating and drinking. Oh, how degrading this carnality appears, when nackedly and plainly set forth, as it is by the terms of this parable. See the deliberate manner in which this low sensuality is welcomed,—is looked forward to,—is regarded as life and happiness. And yet how common is this evidence of a fallen nature and a corrupt heart? How many thousands are there who would start back indignantly if told that they were in the habit of communing with

their souls as this rich man is said to have done; and who, nevertheless, some more grossly, others with so-called refinement, regard the mere eating and drinking of the dry a very important part of its enjoyment! The wine-cup, with its sparkle,—the varied delicacies which tempt the palate, bring out and exhibit the wretched and unworthy lusts of man now, even as they did of old, when our Lord himself designated them as the things which the Gentiles seek. "What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed?"

Once more the rich man speaks to his soul, "*Be merry.*" Take thy fill of pleasure and of worldly enjoyment. The thing to be avoided is sadness. Any thing which will cause a moment's pain or sorrow is to be shunned. Life itself is after all short, and it must be bright throughout. No gloomy thoughts, no fears, no anxieties about God, or final judgment, are to be tolerated. "*Be merry.*" "Let thy heart cheer thee,"—"rejoice in the ways." Let "the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life," minister continued joy and pleasure to thee. What matters it that past experience warns against all such unhallowed enjoyment,—still the pursuit must be followed. Those realities which, when fairly brought into view, make the soul tremble, must all be kept out of sight; excitement and novelty must lend their aid to suppress unpleasant thoughts, and minister to present reckless mirth, which is, alas! too like the crackling of thorns, as noisy as it is short-lived. Truly this is the universal panacea which the natural man lays to his soul. He has no other specific for his disease but this, "Be merry." He has no other talisman by which to charm away unpleasant thoughts but this, "Be merry." He will not, dares not, look within, to notice there the dreadful cause of misery, wretchedness, and death. He flies from himself to his false mirth. He must make himself happy and cheerful by the noise and tumult, the folly, and the vanity, of outward things; and he calls the madness of momentary relief—joy.

And then, while the rich man was thus dealing deceitfully with his soul, ere yet the words of false hope and carnal expectation had escaped from his lips, "*God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall these things be which thou hast provided?*" The parable evidently supposes such a case as that of the heathen monarch in his palace at Baby-

lon, when exulting over all his greatness, and glorying in his pomp and power. At the very moment when his pride and self-dependence were at their height, "While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O King Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken, The kingdom is departed from thee." And obviously this is supposed in the parable for the purpose of bringing the selfish, sensual, daring sinner, approaching as he thinks the very summit of his joy, into direct and immediate contact with the Being whom he has neglected, and who yet, nevertheless, "for all these things will surely bring him into judgment." It gives us at a glance an awful and solemn view of a very common occurrence in such a world as this. Poor, deceived, and guilty man, is seen below, wise in his own conceits, prudent in his own sight, full of plans and hopes for to-morrow; and when we lift up our eyes, we behold the Author of his being, and the judge of his life frowning on him, as he says, "Thou fool!" It may be likewise, that these two things are brought into such close juxtaposition in the parable, in order to hint at a very common experience in the hearts of fallen men. For not unfrequently, at those very moments, when they seem nearest the goal of their hopes,—when all they have set their hearts upon seems about to be realized, and as if they had only to put forth their hands and gather the choice fruit which their souls coveted, —then it is that an irrepressible emotion steals in upon them of doubt and misgiving as to those things in which they have embarked the prosperity and happiness of their souls. How often is the successful moment of worldly enterprise the very time when, almost by an audible voice from heaven, the soul trembles, as Belshazzar did when the hand came forth upon the wall!

How forcible is the term used in the parable "Thou fool!" God had intrusted him with "*goods*," and he immediately regarded them as his own. What folly! "Shall a man rob God?" God had blessed him with plenteous harvests in his fields, the "fool" turned this blessing into a curse, by still further forgetting God. God placed before him many precious opportunities, by using which he might as it were dispose of his abundance in safe places, —even in God's sure keeping,—so that he might have "laid up in store for himself a good foundation against the time to come;" and he had the folly to think his own storehouses the safest, and,

what he liked best, the chiefest good. God had given him powers which, rightly directed, might yield unutterable and endless joy in His holy and reasonable service. The man speaks of worldly rest, carnal indulgence, empty pleasures, as the proper things on which to engage these powers. God held his life in His own hand. He gave it, and he could take it away when he pleased; and yet, with unutterable folly, this man planned, schemed, contrived, labored and expected, without even for a moment taking into consideration this great and solemn truth, that he was leaving Him out of sight "in whom he lived and moved and had his being."

The marginal reading gives a closer and more exact rendering of the original. "This night *do they require* thy soul." The best commentators are agreed that this is the most accurate translation, and that there is a reference here to the ministry of angels in the execution of God's dealings with the children of men. For just as in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus we are told that the latter was "carried by the angels" into Abraham's bosom, so here the messengers of God are supposed to come suddenly upon this foolish, careless sinner, and *demand, require* his soul,—not as a thing freely given up, but as a debt which can no longer be left unsettled. The child of God yields up his soul to God; commits, commends it to his Master, willingly bids it depart to be with Christ, and the angels gently carry it to its haven of rest. The wicked cling tenaciously to their carnal things, and those "ministers of God, who do his pleasure," knock loudly at the door of the earthly tabernacle, and inexorably "require their souls at their hands." "For like pitiless exactors of tribute, terrible angels shall require thy soul from thee unwilling, and through love of life, resisting. For from the righteous his soul is not *required*, but he commits it to God and the Father of spirits, pleased and rejoicing; nor finds it hard to lay it down, for the body lies upon it as a light burden. But the sinner who has enfleshed his soul, and embodied it, and made it earthy, has prepared to render its divulsion from the body most hard: wherefore it is said *to be required* of him as a disobedient debtor, that is delivered to pitiless exactors."

And again, what solemn irony lies in these words, "*Then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?*" You have

lived for nothing else than to provide those things for yourself. You must now leave them, and prepare to meet me. Into whose hands will all that abundance fall? Whose will be the barns and storehouses, and the fruits in which your soul delights? You can not have them yourself. Can you secure them to any one else?

Does not this parable, then, furnish us with extensive evidence of the fallen condition of man, and how "the god of this world has blinded him?" It truly shews us, as in a glass, how his "foolish heart is darkened," and how he has "become vain in his imaginations." It shews us how natural it is for him to forget whence he has derived his life, and to think "that life consists in the abundance of the things which he possesses." It shews us how he covets things, not for God, but for himself; and thus every thing he touches, and which might have ministered to his comfort or his happiness becomes accursed. It shews us how deplorably low and grovelling are his notions of what "good" things are; "ease, eating, drinking, and carnal mirth." It shews us how mad and foolish he is in mistaking these things as if they could supply the cravings of his soul, how insane it is for him ever to lay his account with securing them, and above all, to forget that at any moment his soul may be required of him. He is a fool both in his estimate of the *things* of time, and of *time* itself. And it shews us that, in "laying up treasures for himself," in seeking his own gratification, man impoverishes his own soul "towards God." And that while he may be proudly feeling that he is "rich and increased in goods, and has need of nothing." God's judgment at the very moment is, that he is "poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked."

These deadly characteristics of the natural man lie broadcast over the field of the world. The sins that are painted in this parable are just the common sins of the race. In some they are more prominent, in others less revolting; but all share in them more or less. And this parable then will ever stand like the prophet of old as he pointed to the guilty monarch's heart. When we are tempted to ask, whether *we* too are in darkness and under Satan, it will testify of one "not rich towards God;" and it will apply the solemn truth to us, if not in Nathan's language, at least in the spirit of it,—"Thou art the man."

CHAPTER IV.

CHILDREN IN THE MARKET-PLACE—THE MOTE AND THE BEAM—THE STRAINING OFF A GNAT—CLEANSING THE OUTSIDE OF THE CUP—WHITED SEPULCHERS—GRAVES WHICH APPEAR NOT—THE PHARISEE AND SADDUCEE.

THE last parable gave us the main feature which distinguishes fallen man, and, indeed, which manifests the fact, that he is fallen and under Satan. It tells us that in a great number of ways, and with a force and power operating variously in different individuals, man is "*not rich toward God.*" But there are other marks and tokens of his condition which need to be noticed and examined. Weighty indeed is the condemnation which rests upon him, when it is concluded that either as regards the things of time or time itself he is "*not rich toward God,*" but, on the contrary, endeavors to "*lay up treasure for himself.*" Still, it is needful to observe some other traits which stand forth with no obscurity, and which are in perfect harmony with this universal ungodliness. These are presented before us in a number of parabolic sketches, and that too very emphatically. It will not be needful to consider these at length. Indeed, the effect produced by these life-like touches of the pencil will perhaps be greater by making them pass somewhat rapidly under the eye.

The first of these which we look at is this:

"*But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling to their fellows, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented. For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil. The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners: but Wisdom is justified of her children.*"—Matt. xi. 16–19.

Now, the men of that generation were merely the types of the men of all generations, to whom any message or word comes from that Being whom all discard more or less from their thoughts,—of whom they practically declare, that He shall not reign over them. And just then as the Jewish people objected to God's message when it came through John, for the very opposite reason which influenced them in rejecting Christ, and thus proved the utter folly of their judgment altogether, so do men always refuse to take God at his word, with child-like submission receive just the messages which he sends, and be satisfied with his mode of sending it. The first and natural movement of the sinner's heart, when God speaks to him, is to question something regarding the mode, or even to doubt the reality of the communication altogether. No matter how clear and convincing the evidence may be,—no matter how varied in its attendant circumstances, as, for example, in the outward difference of life in the case of the Baptist and Jesus,—no matter how lavish God has been in furnishing tokens of himself, and of the reality of what he demands,—still the wicked heart craves for something more. "This is not the evidence exactly that convinces me," are practically its words. "If this single point had been different, or if some clearer statement had been made, or if I were to see with my own eye the miracles recorded in Scripture, I might believe." But "wisdom is justified of her children." It is not the lack of evidence, nor is it the absence of any particular kind of evidence that holds the sinner back. It is his own evil heart of unbelief. As long as he keeps that bad tenant within his bosom, then no matter what evidence be supplied, he will turn away from it. No calls to repentance, nor glad tidings of great joy, will awaken either sadness or sorrow within him. A "voice from heaven,"—"one raised from the dead,"—one greater than all the prophets before him, or the appearance of the Son of God himself, will not satisfy him. It is alone when "the veil is taken from the heart," and "faith in God" takes the place of trust in himself, that the sinner says,—whether God's words be many or few, whether the evidence of them be great or little,—"Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." *Caprice* is clearly seen in all man's doings; but in nothing is it so apparent as when he captiously ventures to question the ways and the words of God.

How deep down it lies in the human heart appears sadly manifest in the determined act of wicked unbelief on the part of one of our Lord's favored followers,—"Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." After all man's boasted cleverness,—after all his acuteness in weighing evidence, and learned criticism of all existing testimony, let him take heed, that he be found no better than "children playing in the market-place, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented."

Closely allied to this self-will in finding fault with God, is the cognate evil in the natural man of finding fault with his fellow-man. The one, indeed, necessarily leads to the other. He who dares to arraign his Maker,—who passes under his review the things which belong to God, and ventures to approve or to condemn just as it pleases him, or as it suits his judgment and fancy, will not be backward to enter into judgment with men of like passions with himself; and as in the former case he does not hesitate, so in the latter he does not spare. His conduct, too, in both cases arises from similar causes. Were he not *blinded* by unbelief he would not dare to do the first. Were he not *blinded* as to what he is himself, he would not venture to do the last.

This baneful tendency in the heart of the sinner, as exhibited in his walk and conversation, finds a remarkable illustration in the following parable:—

"*And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.*"—Matt. vii. 3–5; Luke vi. 41, 42.

It will be well to observe here, that the epithet "hypocrite," so frequently applied by our Lord to the Scribes and Pharisees of that day, does not always mean that the parties so designated were *willfully* deceiving those about them by a profession which was not only hollow, but which they *knew* to be so. That it very frequently is used to denote such characters is perfectly true; but it is equally true, that on some occasions, and among

others in the parable now before us, it is used simply to denote the case of a man assuming a character which does not really belong to him, but nevertheless under the fullest persuasion in his own mind that he is what he professes to be. The force of this parable will be lost, unless we bear this in mind. The case of the man who offers to pull out the mote out of his brother's eye supposes the fact of his considering himself to be perfectly clear-sighted. It is not that he designedly tries to conceal from others a defect in his own vision of which he is conscious. On the contrary, his case is the very reverse of this—he is not conscious of any defect; and herein lies his sin. He "considers not" ("perceives not"—Luke) the "beam in his own eye."

What a picture of fallen man! True to the life! Who that has ever taken the trouble of looking within at the springs and motives of his words and acts, but must be sensible that his portrait is drawn here by a hand which infallibly reveals the secrets of all hearts! Who that honestly seeks to know himself but must acknowledge that he is here in the presence of One who thoroughly knows him? It would be falling miserably short of the scope of this parable if we merely applied it to the full blossoming and most matured fruit of that evil which it is meant to mark out. *Censoriousness* has undoubtedly its image accurately traced here. And the man who is even among his fellows notable for this, would do well to pray, as the figure of "the beam" and "the mote" rises before him—"Search *me*, O God, and know my heart; try *me*, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in *me*, and lead *me* in the way everlasting."

But is such a prayer only suited for such extreme cases? Far from it. Is any thing more general—more frequent even among those who would never be designated censorious—than the habit of seeing their neighbor's faults more readily and more clearly than their own? This need not be enlarged upon. It surely needs only to be stated in order to be admitted. Men are lynx-eyed for all the blemishes and faults which disfigure their neighbors. They would indeed consider themselves deficient in perception, and even candor, if they did not observe these things; and thus how often do they set themselves to the removal of whatever is wrong in others, without due consideration as to their own fitness for such duty; or if they do not proceed this length, how

generally do they by word or deed, a sneer of contempt, a wave of the hand, or a word of ridicule, show that while they have described "*the mote*," they have left unnoticed "*the beam*."

Nor must it be overlooked in this parable, that we are taught "the lesson of the true *relative* magnitude which our own faults, and those of our brother, ought to hold in our estimation. What is a 'mote' to one looking on another, is to that other himself 'a beam;' just the reverse of the ordinary estimate."* Suppose the case of two men, whose faults may be regarded very much as on a par. Then to either of them, the very quickness with which he detects those of the other, while he neglects to look within, adds immensely to the magnitude of those faults themselves. The *mote* becomes a *beam*.

But it must not be supposed that our Lord meant by this parable that we are to shut our eyes to the defects which mar the usefulness and dim the luster of the various characters of those around us. This would indeed be a miserable perversion of the lesson. What is demanded therein is not that we shall close our eyes to what needs reformation and improvement in others, but that we shall be, in the first place, jealously anxious to obtain clear vision ourselves. Our Lord distinctly sets this before us. "*First*," says he, "*cast out the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.*" Begin at home. Look within, and bring all the hidden things within the heart to light. Come freely to the light—not keeping back any thing that needs inquiring into, nor reserving something from merited condemnation because you do not want to part with it. "All things" must be "opened before the eyes of him with whom we have to do," and then you will be in no danger of rising in your own estimation at your neighbor's expense, or overlooking worse things in yourself, while you visit him with unhesitating condemnation.

And the reason why our Lord gives this counsel is very obvious. First, as regards the mere power of spiritual perception. If a man has not learned to deal with his own heart unreservedly in the way of tracing out, and bringing into the light of day all that would hide itself there; if he has not experimentally learned how deceitful as well as wicked that heart is—that there is no

* Alford's Greek Testament.

greater difficulty than the unvailing and exposing it to one's self —then he is not prepared to deal wisely with others. He is not capable of entering into all those nice movements of the human heart which are involved in the words and actions of those around. He is like an unskillful musician who attempts to play upon an instrument whose secrets he has not mastered. In doing so, he only displays his own ignorance, and his performance grates harshly on the ears of those who hear. But if a man truly and sincerely submits himself to the teaching of God, and desires above all things a knowledge of himself, dragging out of his bosom all its secrets, whatever be the cost, and prayerfully anxious to have the crooked made straight, the dark light, and the rough plain, then he will "*see clearly*," by the experience he has gained through the operation of the Holy Spirit within himself, to "*pull out the mote out of his brother's eye.*" And, besides, the very process through which he has himself passed will give a gentleness and tenderness to all that he may be called upon to do with others, which he never could otherwise possess. It will make him approach them in a very different manner from what he would have done before. He will now speak as a *friend*, not as a "*judge.*" * He will indulge in no harsh or high-minded reproof. What he says will be uttered in the spirit enjoined by the Apostle, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye that are spiritual, restore such an one, *in the spirit of meekness*, *considering thyself*, lest thou also be tempted." † The expression of the parable will be reversed in his case. He will no longer "*behold*," *gaze at* with pride and self-sufficiency, the faults of others, while he "*considers not*," does not give the slightest look, into his own. On the contrary, he will give himself no quarter, while his heart will overflow with tenderness toward others, "esteeming each one better than himself."

But there is another tendency of the human heart, at first sight apparently very different from what has now been considered, and which yet is a cognate evil with it—one which indeed is very generally associated and closely allied with this self-sufficient condemnation of others. One very short but remarkable saying of our Lord will place this distinctly before us.

"*Ye blind guides, which strain at (off) a gnat, and swallow a camel.*"—Matthew xxiii. 24.

* Matthew vii. 1. † Galatians vi. 1.

Our Lord does not intimate willful deception of others in this parable, any more than in the former. He charges those of whom he speaks with being "blind;" but there is no reason for supposing that they were not perfectly sincere in what they did, and, after their own fashion, thought they were "doing God service." The allusion in this saying is to the care which the Jews, who were scrupulous in the observance of their ceremonial law, took to prevent the possible breach of the commandment in Leviticus xi. 41, 42. For this purpose they were at great pains to strain off their wine before drinking it, lest even by accident the smallest insect should be found therein; and yet, on the other hand, they were so blind, so ignorant, so reckless in other matters, that they would, as it were, "*swallow a camel.*"

In the previous verse, our Lord evidently describes to the letter the character which he sketches in this parable. "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith; ("pass over judgment and the love of God,"—Luke;) these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." They were persons who were scrupulously exact in the performance of the letter of the law. Indeed, so much so, that rather than commit any breach of that letter, they were careful to observe many things which it did not actually enjoin. The most minute particulars were not *too* minute for them to attend to in the daily discharge of what they considered due to the law. But all this time they were neglecting its "*weightier* matters." Judgment, mercy, faith, and the love of God, were lost sight of, and not taken into account at all. Like the rich young ruler, they could say, when the terms of the law were propounded, "All these things have I kept from my youth up; what lack I yet?" but when they were confronted with the spiritual requirements of that law, then, like him, they shrank back, and proved that they had not yet learned the simplest lesson of love to God, and self-denial toward man. Now this is just the character which is most affected by the faults of others. The young ruler just referred to, would be the very man who would be likely to say to his brother, "Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye;" while he "considered not the beam in his own eye." Indeed the more scrupulous the attention paid to

all that is external in conduct, and the more sincerely that all this is done, while the eye directed to what may well be called "the weightier matters" within—seeing that from these are the issues of life—is blinded by the beam in it, the more readily and earnestly will such an one condemn, either in his heart or by word, those around him who do not carry out to the letter all those observances which in his estimate make up the round of all important duties.

It is well to observe, that our Lord does not condemn here scrupulosity in minute matters of conduct considered in itself. There may be an error in this; but it is not what is in hand at present; of that it may be said that each man is a "law unto himself," and that "happy is he that condemneth not himself in the thing which he alloweth." But it is when this scrupulosity is manifested in one way and not in another—when it discharges all its anxiety and care on the smaller, to the neglect of the greater matters, it is then that we see the original of this portrait. "*The straining off a gnat and the swallowing a camel.*" "These ought ye to have done," says our Lord, "and not leave the others undone." And thus, when we behold men whose whole outward conduct is remarkable for the scrupulous care which they take in their dealings with their fellow-men, whose names stand high in the market-place, at the exchange, in the senate, or the cabinet—against whom there is not a word to be said regarding their minute and careful observance of all those moral duties which they consider as forming the great social law of the community; and yet who, nevertheless, have not "taken up the Cross," and "left all" to "follow Christ;" who are strangers to the "love of God" in their hearts, so as to do all for His name's sake alone, who forget that He alone will finally judge them as well as others—who know not that "mercy" toward their fellow-men, and "faith" toward their God, are the two great things of genuine religious character, *these*, notwithstanding all their seeming excellence—notwithstanding their name and reputation—notwithstanding all their sincerity—notwithstanding the purity and virtue attributed to them by others, and which they themselves verily believe that they possess, are yet but "blind guides," "*who strain off a gnat and swallow a camel.*"

And this feature in fallen man is often seen now in the very

form in which it loved to show itself among those who were immediately under our Lord's eye, when He uttered these words. It is not only that we have the picture here of such as obtain in the *world* among *worldly* people the character and reputation of singular morality and virtue, while they lack the one thing needful, but it answers also well for those who, in the observances of religion, in the outward form and frame-work of it, are so careful, that rather than leave any thing of the kind undone they are ready and willing to do more than is required, and yet they are grievously deficient in the whole spirit, life and marrow of religion, having, in fact, "the *form* of godliness, without the *power* of it." These persons are so scrupulously careful over the mosaic work with which they adorn the casket, that they know little or nothing of the priceless gem within. We have many such in these days—men who would be indignant if told that they did not understand the spirit of what they professed, and that they were neglecting the weightier matters of the law while they were engrossed in "times and seasons," and "days and years," in "weak and beggarly elements;" and yet those whom our Lord addressed would have been equally offended, and with equal reason, at such a charge also. Their *sincerity* is not doubted any more than that of the young ruler who came with all his minute observances to question Christ. Their *earnestness* is not questioned any more than that of the Pharisees of old, who "compassed sea and land to make one proselyte." But when *signs* become so magnified as to exclude the far greater importance of the things *signified*, and something of a legal bondage is assumed over the profession of a Gospel faith, when there is the anxious and studied appeal, "Touch not, taste not, handle not," with "the show of will-worship and humility," then must we say of all such, that they are just the parties described by our Lord "*who strain off a gnat and swallow a camel.*"

"*Blind guides.*" How remarkable the epithet! It is just such persons who affect to be "guides." Whether it be the man who rests mainly on his virtuous life, and considers himself as really deserving the praise and commendation of his fellows; or the formalist who is never satisfied unless his "shibboleth" be pronounced correctly; and more than this, it is just such persons that the great multitude of people are ready to acknowledge as

the best guides. The outward decorum of the one, and the devotedness of the other, appear prominently before the public eye, and win proportionate respect. But, after all, they are "*blind guides.*" Whatever be the darkness or blindness of others, they at least have "a beam" in their eye which altogether prevents them from seeing clearly how and where to lead others.

And here we arrive at a new section in the series of parabolic pictures. Hitherto we have had no occasion to deny the *sincerity* of those who, nevertheless, venture to sit in judgment, first on God, and then on their fellow-men, while they arrogate to themselves great excellence of character and conduct by their "straining off gnats." Now, however, we must look at fallen human nature under another of its aspects. The shadows of the picture become darker. As yet, we have seen illustrated the profession of what is false,—now we proceed to examine the portrait of a false profession. Hearken to the following description:—

"*Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye make clean the outside of the cup and platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee! cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also.*"—Matt. xxiii. 25, 26.

"*Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness. Ye fools, did not He that made that which is without make that which is within also? But rather give alms of such things as ye have; and, behold, all things are clean unto you.*"—Luke xi. 39–41.

The figure here is very simple. It is that of a person who takes great care to make the outside of the vessels used at meals thoroughly clean, while he knowingly allows the inside of those vessels, with which, of course, the food he eats must be brought into contact, to remain foul and uncleansed.

This is something altogether different from the "form of godliness." It is the desire to make "a fair show in the flesh." Here we have the character of the hypocrite brought out in one of its worst forms. A man who wishes to appear what he is not —anxious to save appearances, and yet is himself conscious that he is acting a part. The way in which this is set forth in the parable is very striking. The man endeavors to make the outside of the cup look bright and clean. He drinks out of the inside,

which he has wittingly left unclean. And so the hypocrite—the man who says and does not—who purposely does all his acts that he may be seen of man, is yet secretly drinking in iniquity like water. His cup is full, says our Lord, of "*extortion and excess:*" and what his cup is full of, *that* he drinks. He may profess to be honest, generous, and charitable, but he loves to drink in "*extortion.*" He may sound a trumpet before him when he gives alms, but he, at the same moment, makes a prey of "widows' houses" in secret. He may profess to be moderate in his desires, and temperate in his habits; but as far as he dares to go, with safety to the character he wishes to assume, he drinks in "*excess.*" He is a slave to lust in his heart, and he knows it; and what he does *sincerely* is to minister to it.

When our Lord says, "*Cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also,*" he does not mean that the one cleansing will stand for the other; or that the last will take care of itself if the first be done; but simply, that by the kind of cleansing he condemned, the cup was not really clean; and if they would have it so, they must first cleanse that which is within, as the most important part, then their outside cleansing would indeed make a clean cup.

And the very language which he uses points distinctly to the true source of all real reformation in the character of the sinner. Just as it is out of the heart that there proceeds all that defiles, so it is the heart which must *first* be cleansed, if the cleansing of the outside life is to be any thing more than a mere cheat—a clever disguise to hide the depravity and ungodliness which lurk within. "*Give alms,*" says Christ, "*of such things as ye have,*" or rather "of such things as are *within you.*" Let real love to God and man flow out from within. Deny self on behalf of God and your neighbor; and then, "*Behold all things are clean to you.*" Such a course of purification will be complete in its process and work. A new heart and a right spirit, like-mindedness to Christ will alone lead to the transforming of the life; and the once polluted and vile sinner will really become what the hypocrite only feigns to be. But alas, how much need have those who wish to stand well before the world to take good heed unto themselves, lest they be found at last to have been very diligent in removing what was unsightly in the outward act and conduct, while they

have all the time been greedily consuming evil things in their hearts.

This parable, then, give us the case of the natural man, with his heart loving the "wages of iniquity,"—"*full of extortion and excess;*" and yet hypocritically seeking to hide his real character and conduct from the eyes of those who have no other means of judging than by the "outward appearance." But if we turn now to another parable, we shall find this fallen creature painted in darker colors still.

"*Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.*"—Matt. xxiii. 27.

In the picture of the "cleansing the outside of the cup and platter," we behold the character of the hypocrite in his endeavor to appear fair, upright, honest, and temperate before men, while in reality he is a slave to inward lust and passion. In this we have the hypocrite portrayed in reference to his *religious* profession. With a fair and glittering appearance outside, he is only as a chamber of the dead. The character here represented, is one which makes much profession of religion, which arrogates to itself much credit for its service to God, and is yet inwardly conscious that it loves him not. Like those of old who said, "The Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord are we;" but who, nevertheless, were no better than "*whited sepulchers.*" Their heart is not a temple, but a tomb!

And this hypocrisy is even more odious than the former. The man who deceives his neighbor regarding his actual character, in the matter of honesty or temperance, may make no pretension whatever to being religious. But *this* man not only acts a part in society in the matter of morality, but of religion also. His hypocrisy is deeper dyed. He strives to deceive not only man but God; and just as he finds that he can often succeed in doing the former, so he foolishly thinks that he can do the latter, "Tush, God does not see!" "Is there knowledge in the Most High?" As his evil course proceeds, he becomes more and more confident in his deceitfulness. His heart becomes every day more insensible to all that is upright and good. It is "*full of hypocrisy and iniquity.*" It is a spiritual grave—a chamber of the dead—a

sepulcher of corrupt and corrupting things—a place of defilement—a highway to hell. Of all characters displayed in Scripture this is the most terrible—daringly to "mock God," and to deceive man; to use religion as a cloak to cover iniquity, and, Balaam-like, to make much profession with the lips of honoring and serving God, while the heart is "following after its covetousness," "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity."

And it may be that a lower depth still in this character is set forth by our Lord in the following words, which appear to have been added by him after the above:—

"*Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them.*"—Luke xi. 44.

The allusion here is to the notion which existed among the Jews, that by walking over a grave a man contracted ceremonial uncleanness. And so here the hypocrite is represented as the means of defilement and pollution to others. Passers by become, or ever they are aware, infected by him, and allured to evil. Like Jeroboam, who set up the calves at Dan and Bethel, and said, "These be thy gods, O Israel;" though his heart-purpose was simply, by this outward respect for God, to secure himself, as he thought, in the kingdom; and so, we are told, he "made Israel to sin." Or still more awfully have we this character revealed to us in the case of Balaam, who not only "loved the wages of iniquity," while he made much profession of doing nothing except as the Lord willed; but who also, when he found himself shut up by the terrors of Jehovah from cursing Israel, as he had hoped to do, in order to obtain the honors and the rewards of Midian, set himself, with hellish malignity, to counsel the king of Moab to place a stumbling-block before Israel; and so far succeeded in his devilish attempt as to introduce such a foul and wide-spread leprosy of conduct into the camp of Israel as to draw down an immediate and terrible judgment from the Lord. Balaam would try to make people believe that he was influenced not only by integrity, but by the fear of God; and yet he will gratify himself at all hazards—he will feed his covetousness though thousands of souls perish. Is there not something very similar to this in the conduct of a modern despot, who has given the rein to his godless and selfish ambition, who is fully resolved

to gratify it if he can, at the expense of thousands of lives, the breaking up of peace in the world, and the misery and ruin of nations, against whom he has no other ground of quarrel than that they stand in the way of his ambitious projects? And all this, too, has been heralded forth to an astonished world, by the sickening profession of a godlike faith, and the hypocritical cant that he can not do otherwise without doing violence to his religious conscientiousness! Here, indeed, is a grave full of dead men's bones, and all manner of uncleanness—a grave over which thousands and thousands "*walk*" to their own destruction.

And here let us turn for a moment and briefly survey the ground over which we have passed. Man's wayward heart made him an easy prey to Satan. He gave the tempter admission, and the latter has improved his advantage to the utmost. It is not *his* fault if the mental and spiritual darkness which fell on the soul of man does not become deeper every day. It is from no want of will or forethought on his part if the sore disease with which the poor soul is afflicted becomes not every day more loathsome and more deadly. These are "his goods," and he will spare no pains to guard and keep them. They are "his goods," and it will not be his fault if the "last state of the soul is not worse than the first,"—"tenfold more the child of hell than before."

The two great sects into which the Jews were chiefly divided in the days of our Lord, presented before him the very subjects on which these evil powers were working so successfully; and they exhibited in their life and conduct the sad and terrible evidence of this. And it is well to bear in mind, that the Sadducee and the Pharisee, while the one and the other appear before us in the record we have of all that Jesus said and did, are but the types of the men of every age and every nation. The *name* of each sect was Jewish. The characteristic which distinguished it belongs to the human race. The Sadducee represents not merely the men in other nations and at other times, who deny the fact of a future state of existence, of a resurrection, or of a spiritual being, but especially of that much larger class, who, without formally denying these things, practically live as if they did—men, who to all intents and purposes, live as if this life, and this alone, were worth thinking about, and who say to themselves,

"Take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." The Pharisee, on the other hand, represents the outwardly correct, the self-righteous, and the hypocrite. And thus, while the parables of our Lord are mostly directed against these different sects, as they displayed themselves in his day, we must not suppose that they were meant to be applied solely to them. On the contrary, they are but as the glass in which we may behold the clearly-written evidence of the havoc which sin and Satan together have made in the heart and life of man of all times and ages. All the revealings then of the true character and inner life of those around him, whether the leaven of the Sadducee or the Pharisee be the immediate subject of reproof, are equally for us, and for our children, as admonitions. They are not merely applicable at *second* hand to us, but go directly to the ungodly and unrighteous thought or action now as then.*

And see, then, how He, "who knows what is in man," paints his real character in its unregenerate condition! See how He sets up great landmarks to put us on our guard, if we will but take heed! See how He warns us of the shoals and the quicksands where we are ready to make shipwreck of our souls! What a festering mass of corruption must humanity be, when the bad elements of which it is composed, singled out and dragged into light, are such as we have seen. The rich fool, the children in the market-place, the mote and the beam, the straining off a gnat, the cleansing of the outside of the cup, the whited sepulcher, the hidden grave—these are the things which unerring wisdom has selected to draw our attention to this sad reality; that we may not only hear by the ear, but, as it were, see by the eye what our actual condition is—that "our iniquity has increased over our head," and our "trespass gone up into heaven,"—that whatever may be our miserable and false estimate of ourselves, the Searcher of hearts tells us that He has looked and that He beholds none righteous, no not one, and that "the imagination of the thoughts of man's heart are only evil continually."

* See in the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican.

CHAPTER V.

THE AX LAID TO THE ROOT OF THE TREES—THE FLOOR THOROUGHLY PURGED.

And here we reach a point of deep and solemn interest in our consideration of the parables. The gospel which Christ preached, and which alone could be preached in virtue of his own sufferings and death, is indeed a message of peace, good-will, and love. It announces deliverance to the captive, recovery of sight to the blind, life from the dead, joy for the sad, and the acceptable year of the Lord. When Jesus in the synagogue of Nazareth opened the book of the Prophets, and read therein to the assembled people from the prophecies of Isaiah,—"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor: he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captive, and recovery of sight to the blind: to set at liberty those that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord;" he then added, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears." The glad tidings of great joy were then sounding in their ears, and their Prophet's words might well engage their attention to the joyful sound,—"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money: come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." The people who heard Jesus on that day at Nazareth might well "bear him witness, and wonder at the gracious things which proceeded out of his mouth."

But it is important to bear in mind that there is a dark as well as a bright side to the Gospel. Yea, the darkness has a relative proportion to the brightness. The greater the latter, the deeper the former. Paul felt this in his inmost heart. It was this which made him cry out, "Who is sufficient for these things?" seeing

that the Gospel with which he was intrusted made him "either a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death." He never could open his mouth for Christ, or write a word for him, that he was not either the means of blessing or of cursing. Now, this gives a very solemn stamp to the Gospel dispensation. The peculiar excellence of the Gospel is that to the sinner "God is just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus;" that in it, "mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other." But the very reconciling of these things over the sacrifice of the "Lamb of God," gives us to understand, that if this sacrifice be neglected—if we trample on it—if we refuse to be sprinkled by the precious blood there shed, then there "remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation which shall consume the adversaries." If the Gospel is not received by faith in Him who ratified it by his own sufferings and death, then it becomes terrible judgment, and no future act of God's mercy remains to temper its awful terrors. If we refuse to accept of it as a day of grace, it will inevitably become to us a day of vengeance.

And is it not a little remarkable that this feature of the Gospel dispensation is pressed upon our attention even before the words of peace and mercy are heard from the lips of Jesus himself. We have, as it were, a solemn warning, to carnal, unbelieving men, that his season of probation is now rapidly passing away—that the limit to God's forbearance and mercy is very near—that the "end of all things is at hand,"—and that now having sent His Son for the fruits of His vineyard, there is no other way of escape for the sinner, if "he neglect so great salvation." It was John the Baptist who was commissioned thus to warn sinners of the danger of rejecting the offer about to be made to them personally by the Son of God himself. When he came baptizing those converts, who, stirred up by means of his preaching, confessed their sin, we are told that "he saw many of the Sadducees and Pharisees come to his baptism,"—those very parties whom we have seen in the previous chapter as faithfully representing sinful men of every age and nation—the one in all that is infidel, selfish, sensual, and earthly—the other in all that is formal, superstitious, proud, self-righteous, and hypocritical. And it was then, when John saw these men before him, that while he rebuked them

sharply as a "generation of vipers," and urged repentance, and works meet for repentance on them, he at the same time took occasion to warn them solemnly of the great feature just mentioned in the Gospel dispensation which was then opening before them. He did this by uttering two parables in their hearing. Here is the first,—

"*And now also the ax is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.*"—Mat. iii. 10; Luke iii. 9.

The image in this parable is very striking. It is that of a man who owns certain trees, and who may be seen early in the morning passing through the midst of them with an ax in his hand. The very implement he carries intimates to us the sort of work in which he is engaged. He presently finds a tree, worthless and unsightly, taking up room which would be better occupied by something else—a mere cumberer of the ground. That tree must be removed. Perhaps he does not proceed at once to do so, but with his mind made up, he "*lays the ax at the root of the tree*," ready at hand. And his doing this, it must be observed, is in the parable considered as tantamount to his actually carrying out his purpose. When the axe is thus laid at the root of the trees, it is added then "*every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit* IS *hewn down, and cast into the fire.*"

Now, this is just what Christ did when he came into the flesh. If, on the one hand, this mission was to make reconciliation for the transgressors and to bring in everlasting righteousness, it was equally to "finish transgressions and make an end of sins." He "laid the ax at the root of the tree." By the very covenant of peace which He has introduced, He has at the same time brought judgment near to the sinner. He has made, for the last time, an effort, and that the greatest of all, to convince the sinner that He has a controversy with him which must now be settled, either by his unconditional and complete surrender, or by his speedy and terrible punishment. And mark this well, that His dealing with the sinner will proceed upon the simple fact, "fruit," or "no fruit,"—"according to that done in the body, whether it be good or bad." The Gospel message is indeed one of grace, and it is by grace alone through faith that the sinner can be saved; but here, upon the very front of Christ's mission, is written clearly and

indelibly that the *judgment* shall strictly proceed on works. Where these exist, where they are seen and manifest, they will prove that the sinner has believed, and is saved; where they are not, they will equally prove that he has rejected the counsel of God against himself, and his condemnation will be just. At the very outset, then, the sinner is solemnly warned that sentence of death is hanging over his head; that the Gospel of peace has brought that sentence nearer than ever to its execution, yea, laid it at his very door, where already the "Judge standeth," and unless he speedily repent and "bring forth fruits meet for repentance," he must be cut down as a tree, be left to wither away, and to be burned! On the other hand, he is also given to understand that no merely ceremonial adhesion to the Gospel will be of any service; no mere acknowledging of Christ with the lips, "Lord, Lord;" but that the reality of his profession must be clearly and undeniably exhibited by his being "created anew in Christ Jesus unto *good works*," otherwise he will inevitably be "*hewn down*," and his head-knowledge and nominal acceptance of Christ will only increase his condemnation, and mark his rejection of his Master, and his Master's rejection of him.

But the Baptist enforced the same truth, though in another aspect of it, by an additional parable. He proceeded to say, speaking of Jesus:—

"*Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner: and he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.*" —Matt. iii. 12; Luke iii. 17.

The harvest-work alluded to in this parable is well known, and needs no comment. It serves, however, to present the solemn truth which was the subject of John's warning in another point of view than was done before. A fruitless tree among fruitful ones is recognized at once. The distinction is seen at a glance; there is no need of any special process of investigation. Not so with the heap of mingled grain and chaff, which lies on the farmer's barn-floor, when he has gathered in the fruits of his fields, and threshed out his full ears of corn. There is one confused mass, wheat and chaff lie together not easily to be distinguished even on the surface, while it is impossible to say whether the one or the other mostly composes the hidden heap below. It is when he carries it to his winnowing-floor that the separation takes place,

and the distinction is seen. There, by the strong blast of his winnowing machine he drives off the light chaff, while the heavy wheat falls on the floor at his feet. The latter is gathered up carefully and stored in his garner. The former is either cast out to be trodden under foot as worthless, or burned with fire. And thus the Baptist warns sinful men that in Messiah's day, the day of His kingdom of grace on the earth, while "the ax is laid to the root of the tree," the sinner may well take heed not to comfort himself with the false peace, that he will be overlooked in the crowd. Many a man is forced, in the secret of his heart, to admit that God might righteously judge him, and cut him down as a barren tree, who yet deceives himself with the miserable hope that in some way or another, he does not know how, he will yet escape the terrible doom at last; that just as he passes muster with his fellow-men, so also, by some undefined process, he will be allowed to pass in the great day of account. This parable tells him his hope is vain. It announces to the Sadducee and the Pharisee of all generations, that the gospel day, however much it bears for a time the mark of "the evil being mingled with the good," is a day, nevertheless, in which the preparation is going on for a complete and final separation of these ill-assorted materials. It tells all such that Christ going forth on his mission of love and mercy, yet has "*his fan in his hand*," with which he is in readiness to "*thoroughly purge his floor*," and to "*gather his wheat into his garner*."

Nor must we omit to notice, that John uttered this parable immediately after he had spoken of the special distinction of Messiah's kingdom. "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." Christ's work as the great baptizer in his Church is first, that by the power of the "Holy Ghost," he may purify and refine each heart as silver and gold are purified and refined in the fire. He will have none at the last owned by Him as His, otherwise than as they have thus been tried, purified, and sanctified. His workmanship in them will be a perfect one; they will be holy and without spot, and the very same jealousy, therefore, with which he will to the utmost cast out of each of his people every "root of bitterness," will lead him to the most rigid and inexorable exclusion from the new Jerusalem, of any thing that "defileth, or that worketh abomination, or that maketh a lie."

The Gospel, then, though it be indeed "glad tidings of great joy to all people," comes to the sinner with words of truth which may well make him anxious and alarmed lest he be consumed. It speaks plainly to him, as belonging to "a generation of vipers," to a poisonous and deadly brood. It warns him of "the ax laid to the root of the trees," of the "fan in the hand" of the great husbandman; that it is alone the tree with *fruit*, or the precious *wheat* which shall not be "cast into unquenchable fire"—and it leaves these solemn words ringing in his ears—"Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, *to give every man according as his work shall be.*"

CHAPTER VI.

THE BLIND LEADING THE BLIND—UNPROFITABLE SERVANTS.

BUT if man's condition be such as we have seen it described, and if even the Gospel of peace itself issues forth with such solemn notes of warning, it may be well now to look at the utter helplessness of man himself under these sad and threatening circumstances. His condition is wretched indeed, whether we consider it in its intrinsic sinfulness, or as under Satan, and he is in imminent peril of everlasting ruin. Is there no escape? Thanks be to God there is. A door of hope is opened to him in the valley of Achor. A new and a living way is laid down by which he may flee from the wrath to come. Still, as there is but this *one* way, and no other; since, too, is is a "narrow way," and the entrance to it is by a "strait gate," and so it can not be very attractive to a carnal mind; and as all men would fain discover some other and more easy way, it becomes of great moment that we should see how every other way but this one is a false one, and instead of leading to life, leads only to destruction. It is important to shew clearly man's utter helplessness to escape by any other means than that one wherein God has chosen to be his "helper and deliverer."

There are two parables of our Lord which illustrate this truth in its length and breadth. The first of these is a brief but very emphatic one—

"*If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.*"—Matthew xv. 14.

"*And he spake a parable unto them, Can the blind lead the blind? Shall they not both fall into the ditch?*"—Luke vi. 39.

The illustration here is very simple. No one is absurd enough

to suppose that one blind man is a trustworthy guide for another. No blind man, incapable as he is himself to distinguish one object from another, would be so foolish as to yield himself to the guidance of another equally incapable with himself.

And here this truth then, first of all, is placed before us under a figure which can not be mistaken, that "it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps;" that each individual of the human race has had his "foolish heart" so darkened by sin as to be unable by any means to find his own way out of the labyrinth into which he has unhappily wandered. Wise though he be in his own eyes, and prudent in his own sight, he is utterly unable to deliver himself, or to discover a way of escape from the wrath to come. He stumbleth at noon-day as at midnight, because there is no light in him. Spiritual things can not be discerned by the natural man, "neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned," and he walks on still in darkness, not knowing whither he goeth.

Now, it is not a difficult thing generally to convince man that he needs guidance regarding the things of God and eternity. The vast majority of the human race are well prepared to admit this, not indeed that they are conscious of their guilty ignorance and danger, but because they are idle and careless, slothful and negligent in these things themselves. Thus they very readily and with great facility turn to the right hand or to the left, and fall an easy prey to the first plausible guide that presents himself, to save them any further trouble of groping for the way themselves. Strange infatuation! The very man who would laugh to scorn a blind man calmly and wilfully selecting another blind man as his guide—yet when he feels in need of guidance himself in other and still higher matters, does, nevertheless, willingly commit himself to the direction of one as spiritually blind as he is, and trusts implicitly to the guidance of another as incapable as he is himself to discern the right way, or to guard against the numberless dangers which surround him on every side.

And, alas! how many "blind guides" have we? Men who with utter ignorance, and darkened understandings in all that belongs to God, yet unblushingly proclaim their wisdom, penetration, skill, and spiritual light. "We are the men," they cry, "and wisdom shall die with us." There is no want of bold and

reckless assertion in these men. They make up for their lack of sight by their ready willingness to undertake any thing which poor fallen man may require to aid him in his miserable condition. In the midst of their blindness, they are ever crying "We see," until they begin to believe their own lies, and others begin to believe them also. They grope past all the bright and precious promises of God, and boldly affirm that these are all the mere creatures of a weak and fanatical imagination. They stumble on, in the very face of impending judgment, with more than the terrors of Sinai right before them in the way, and yet they mockingly deride the very existence of these things. They tell men, though God hath spoken, not to listen to *Him*, but to *them*, and that it only needs every one to be of their way of thinking to cause this wilderness to become a garden—the desolations of earth to disappear before the smiles of plenty and peace—and the disorder and misery of society to give place to a golden age of justice, truth, and love. These are the men who see "motes in their brother's eye," and desire to take them out, while in reality "the beam is in their own eye;" and so clearness of vision is impossible. Alas, the end of all this is misery, despair, and ruin! Whether the guidance of these men takes a religious or an irreligious aspect—whether it be the direction of the Jesuit confessor, or the self-willed presumption of our modern professors of infidelity, the end is the same—they who lead, and those who are led by them, shall "*both fall into the ditch;*" it will be "as with the servant so with his master." "The candle of the wicked," that which he vainly and foolishly thought would give him light, and direct his own way, and that of others, "shall be put out," and the Prophet's words shall have their full and terrible accomplishment: "Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, (strange fire, not kindled from the sanctuary,) and compass yourselves about with sparks, (miserable sparks, which only dazzle, and are useless to guide aright;) *walk* in the light of your fire, and of the sparks which ye have kindled. This shall ye have at my hands, *ye shall lie down in sorrow.*"*

And surely in this short parable, we have intimated to us very emphatically the absolute necessity of a guidance that is not blind—of a light that will not go out in darkness, and leave the

* Isaiah l. 11.

poor sinner that trusted in it to deplore his utter and irremediable ruin. Where *all* are blind, and so utterly incapable of finding the right way, or guiding each other to it, is it possible to suppose that He who is light itself will not help the poor benighted wanderers? Assuredly he will. Yea, he has done it. He has made a revelation. He has opened the windows of the upper sanctuary, and suffered a bright beam of heavenly light to glance down among these dark and sightless ones wandering on the brink of the precipice of woe, and one after another stumbling and falling over it. This God of light has not left himself without witness. He *has* spoken once, yea, twice. His own Son, "the *brightness* of his glory, the express image" of the Eternal Light, has come into the world; and as he came among the blind wanderers of mankind, he proclaimed himself to be "the light of the world;" and one of the greatest of his followers pointed emphatically to him as the very sum and substance of what blind men require, and God has graciously bestowed. "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and *Christ* shall give thee *light*." Alas! it is when there is such a light as this by which the footsteps of the erring may be led safely in the paths of peace, that we see on every side "*the blind leading the blind*," and "*both falling into the ditch*." Oh! that both leaders and followers might acknowledge their utter helplessness, and come to the Light of Life!

But if man is helpless by reason of his darkened heart, so that he can never by himself discern the path of life, or extricate himself from all the difficulties and dangers which surround him, he is also helpless as regards the value of any thing he can do to merit the favor of God, even supposing he were to see the importance of making the attempt. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." *There* is man's spiritual blindness. But can he do any thing, by which, blind though he be, he may yet obtain the favor of God? In other words, what is the real value of any service which man may or can render unto God? Let the following parable answer the question:—

"*But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and*

sit down to meat? And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink? Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do."—Luke xvii. 7–10.

In order to gather the full import of this parable, it will be necessary that its connection with the preceding exhortation of Christ be noticed.

Our Lord had just enforced two duties, which, from whatever side they are viewed, require much self-denial, watchfulness, and prayer, in order to their performance. The one was the duty of walking so circumspectly as to give no cause of offence. The other was the duty of frank forgiveness. Very little knowledge of the human heart will suffice to convince us of the difficulty involved in these duties. The Apostles felt it. They began to see more and more clearly that they were not to advance by a royal road to earthly ease and worldly distinction as followers of the Messiah; but that they had to do battle at the very outset with their own corrupt hearts—that their first grand duty was to subdue themselves; and that this was a warfare which could not be conducted by sight, but by faith in Him who alone they well knew could give them victory; and so they earnestly, and in a body, made the urgent entreaty to their Master, "Increase our faith." The Apostles *uniting* in this request, (the only instance on record,) gives exceeding weight and importance to the subject of their petition. It proves what a conviction they had of *faith*, that it was alone by means of it that the highest attainments could be made, and that when they did pray for it, it was for the very purpose that it might bear its precious fruit of true holiness.

Our Lord, by his reply to their united supplication, confirms the Apostles in their view of the vital importance of "faith." He says, "If ye had faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye might say unto this sycamore-tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou cast into the sea; and it should obey you." As if he had said, You have asked aright. You have touched the spring which, as a means, is all-powerful in renewing, purifying, and sanctifying your whole being. These things of which I have spoken are

indeed contrary to all your natural feelings, and seem in themselves almost impossible to acquire; but with the faith which you ask, and which I am ready to give, you will be made more than conquerors. "Without me ye can do nothing;" but a living faith in me will so "strengthen" you as to enable you to "do all things."

And now will be seen the importance of the parable which our Lord immediately proceeded to deliver. The natural tendency of the human heart might lead the Apostles to go from one extreme to another—from the depressed feeling of being utterly unable to attain to such an amount of Christian grace as was required, to the notion that, with the help vouchsafed to them according to their request, and with their Master's testimony to its power, their graces and good works might become intrinsically valuable, and be so excellent in the sight of God as to deserve commendation from him on their own account.

It was to meet and obviate this tendency that our Lord spake this parable. In which, while he emphatically lays down the real estimate which must be made of the work of those who are truly his servants, he at the same time shows the impossibility of any merit arising out of that work at all. It will be seen that the parable may be regarded from two distinct points of view. Thus we have first of all brought under our notice the case of a man who has sent his servant into the field, in order to do the work of his master there. At evening, when the day's work in the field is over, the servant returns home. And our Lord asks the question, whether any master would then, because of the servant's fidelity in the field, excuse him from his duty in the house? On the contrary, would he not expect him to be as faithful in the discharge of those duties in the household which were incumbent on him, as he had been in those in the field?

And this gives us a very striking illustration of what is owing by the creature to his Creator—by man to God. It is indeed very different from what man himself holds. His whole conduct proves the laxity of his principles in this matter. How often does he leave out of consideration one duty, while it may be he is not habitually neglecting another. How frequently do we find that a man will spend his day in the field, and that not idly, who, nevertheless, when he returns home, idles there. And more than

this, some may do this carelessly, inadvertently, and from slothfulness; others, however, do it knowingly and wittingly. There is a grievous tendency in the human heart to put a well-performed duty (as it is esteemed) "over against" one that is neglected, to let the one be a sort of make-weight for the other—to silence conscience for what is left undone, by thinking much of that which we consider well done. How often the excuse is readily made for shrinking from the fatigue or the trouble of the household duty, *because* the out-door work has engaged us so much, and occupied our time, our thoughts, and our labor! Nor must we omit to notice, that this perversion of what real duty to God is, has been wrought into a system in the corrupt communion of the Church of Rome. There a complete commercial barter has been established, in virtue of which the good of one action may be transferred so as to cover or make up for the want of it in another. The servant may indulge himself in one way, if he restrains himself in another. He may be relieved from one responsibility if he does not shink from another. Nor has this fatal tendency rested here. For even the good which one man has done, is supposed to be capable of being transferred to another, so that one man's prayer may be regarded as having superseded the necessity of another man's prayer! or the good deed of the one, by a process of ecclesiastical legerdemain, be regarded very much as the good deed of the other.

Now our Lord's parable cuts up such noxious weeds by the roots. There is no such principle of give and take in the great matter of what we owe to God. The grand, the universal, the unchanging rule is, "These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." He with whom we have to do will never admit the performance of one duty to stand for the performance of another. Nor can he ever esteem such excellence to exist in the one as to require less excellence in the other. The claim he has upon us is as strong at evening as in the morning. Just as he sends us forth into the fields to our labor and to our work until the evening—"Go, work in my vineyard;" so when the evening comes, as the shadows are falling, and nature would willingly rest itself from duty, he still meets us with the command—"Make ready, gird thyself, and serve me."

And it is very interesting to note how, by a single touch in the

picture, our Lord conveys to us the great and blessed truth, that all this fulfillment of duty, both in the field and in the house, while it is required fully, and no reserve of the one allowed because of the discharge of the other, does, nevertheless, lead certainly to refreshment and rest at last—"*Till I have eaten and drunken; and* AFTERWARD *thou shalt eat and drink.*" He loves to see his people happy, he rejoices in their refreshment and rest. He delights in their calm spiritual enjoyment and repose. But he knows this is neither good nor safe, that in fact it can not be attained by a half-hearted, or a half-performed service; and so he never ceases to urge his commands that they may be fully and heartily complied with, because it is only "in the keeping of them that there is great reward." It was only when his six day's work was over, and after he beheld and saw *all* he had done that it was "very good," that he "rested" himself; and so he desires his creatures to understand that he demands *all* their duties to be performed, not one sacrificed for another, but each and all done well; first, because it is right—they are his servants, and it is their duty; and next, because he loves them, and desires to see them *rest* in the full enjoyment of his favor, which is better than life. It is when the great Saviour of the Church is able to say, "I have eaten *my* honey-combs with *my* honey: I have drunk *my* wine with *my* milk,"—accepted the free will-offerings of those he loves—that he adds, "eat, O friends, yea drink abundantly, O beloved."

But the parable presents us with another view of the relationship between God and man. It makes known to us what is the real intrinsic value of any thing man can do in the service of God. Our Lord adds, to what has just been considered, "*Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not.*" This question obviously does not refer to any kindly feeling that may exist between the master and the servant. That is not the point here. What our Lord means to bring out is this —Does the servant by the mere discharge of what is his incumbent duty, put his master under any obligation to him? By the terms of his engagement he is to perform certain services. When these are done they are not to be regarded as furnishing a claim in his favor, so as to make his master his debtor; they are simply the duties which are fairly required at his hands, which it would

not be honest in him to neglect, and which he has no merit in fulfilling.

"*So likewise ye,*" says Christ, "*when ye shall have done all these things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which is our duty to do.*" Here we have all man's performances, all that he can possibly do in the service of God, estimated at the right value. Look at it first in the extreme case, *supposed* by the words "*when ye shall have done* ALL." Supposing that to the minutest point, to the very utmost "farthing," all is paid that is required by God—every service carefully attended to—every duty willingly, cheerfully, and completely performed—all kinds of work, in the field, and in the household, not only done, but well done, what is the conclusion? We are not for a moment to presume thateven by all this we can make God our debtor. We are not for a moment to think that we are such *profitable* servants as to lay just claim by reason of these services to his favor, or, in other words, to acquire such merit as He must acknowledge, and the reward of which it will not be just in him to withhold. "*When ye shall have done* ALL," *all* those things that are commanded you —when through grace, the supply of the Spirit, and the exercise of a living faith—not weak faith "as a grain of mustard-seed," but faith which is strong, great, lively, and influential—a faith that can remove mountains—when by such help you are able to attain the greatest eminence in the Christian walk—when, let it even be supposed, these very graces which seem now so hard to attain, are not merely reached, but perfected—when your whole life, both inner and outward, is so brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ that not the slightest offence shall arise from your word or deed, either to the little ones of the flock or to the world at large—when, let it be further supposed, you have attained to a full, unbroken, and unclouded reflection of your Divine Master's character in the forgiveness of trespasses—when this highest of all standards is attained—when this glorious image is stamped indelibly on you, and surrounds your character with the light, beauty, and loveliness of heaven, from whence your Master came, in order that he might take you back with him to enjoy its glory forever—when *all* this is done, so fully and so well done, as we have supposed: then our Lord himself has put into our mouth the only fitting language which can become even such

attainments as these—"*We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which it was our duty to do.*"

And thus we have the clear and unmistakable judgment of eternal wisdom as to the intrinsic worth of any thing that man can do. Whatever he may spend in the discharge of his duty, that is not a matter of choice with him, but simply a part of that duty itself. If he does not exert himself to the very utmost of his power, he comes short of his duty, and is to be condemned. If he suffer nothing to keep him back; if in that which is laid upon him to do, he does it "with his might," spending all he has to bestow upon it, turning it to the best account, then this is nothing more than his duty. A duty unfulfilled exposes the servant to blame and punishment. A duty fulfilled, is after all nothing more or better than a duty.

And so all occasion is cut off for man supposing that by any righteous acts of his—by a life of unspotted, unsullied obedience, if such could ever be—he can possibly acquire such merit, or, according to the language in our Lord's interpretation of the parable, be so "*profitable*" as to engage the favor of God to himself as a matter of right, justice, or reward. The utter folly becomes here very apparent of a man venturing to hope that by any series of performances—whatever be the amount of his self-denial, his love, his holiness, his devotedness, he can make up to God for a single breach of his law that has been committed;—that there is such price, such costliness, such excellence in his latter service, that all that was formerly wrong, blemished, polluted, and dishonoring to God, shall never be had in remembrance by reason of the value that God sets upon it, and the profit to himself, his kingdom, his government, and his law, that it brings.

But it is important to observe that the heaviest blow aimed against man's self-righteousness in this parable, is one that is not expressed, but only implied. And perhaps it is all the heavier because of the manner in which it is implied. Our Lord takes a supposed case, and draws his conclusion from *that*. He takes the very best that can be conceived. "*When ye have done all:*" and then he tells them they are still "*unprofitable.*" If then it be so in such a case as this, *a fortiori*, how much more in the actual cases as they exist, where these things at the best are so imperfectly done, where there are such miserable deficiencies and shortcom-

ings in the performance of duty even by God's own people, and still more, in those who are not striving as God's people do, nor seeking the help which they have sought and found, and which can alone enable them to perform to the least extent, or in any way, what they owe to God.

What a condemnation does this parable pronounce against that slip-shod conception of the relation between God and man, which leads so many to regard as so very easy the making up of their concerns, and arranging and settling their accounts with God—which leads so many to talk with exceeding flippancy as well as sin and folly, of their making their peace with God, of their satisfaction that they have not done this or that which others have done, and to turn at last their faces to the wall, in the hour of death and on the threshold of the judgment, as they thank God they are able to look back upon a well spent life! And thus, forsooth, they can freely trust themselves to Him, and render up their souls with comfort to one, who, as they imagine, owes them eternal life, deliverance from death, and every blessing in heaven, because they, poor, wretched, blinded souls! have done, *on the whole*, what has satisfied themselves, and must therefore be satisfactory and valuable to Him! What insanity is this! "Oh that mine head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!"

We shall yet have to draw attention to the blessed truth, that while "all we" who have "gone astray," must ever confess "we are *unprofitable* servants," there is *one*, "chief among ten thousand," "the altogether lovely," who alone was a "*profitable*" servant. In the mean time, it is interesting to observe that our Lord, in giving the parable we have just considered, had only one thing in view by it, namely, to guard against our placing a value on any thing we do, which does not belong to it. His simple object is, to clear that most important point which he illustrates—the relationship between God and his creature man—lest we think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think. Unless we bear this in mind, the parable will inevitably wear somewhat of a cold and repulsive aspect to us, as if exhibiting but little kindliness and consideration on the one part, or little of a service of love on the other. But as the truth it represents

is so important, as it lies at the root of the scheme of Redemption itself, as any mistake about it is fatal, and as the tendency in man's heart to make mistakes regarding it is so universal, we need not be surprised at the *apparent* harshness with which it is set forth, because it is alone by this means that perfect distinctness is obtained for the matter in hand.

How precious and delightful it is to turn to the language of our Lord on another occasion, which, from the similarity of the figure, can not fail to be associated in our minds with the parable before us! He is not, as now, guarding his people against the danger of supposing that their good works can ever be intrinsically valuable or profitable in the sight of God—but he is urging them forward in the steadfast and faithful discharge of duty for his name's sake—under the trust they have from him, and in prospect of his returning to take the kingdom to himself—and so then he graciously promises to do, *of his own love and kindness*, what he shows above he is not *bound to do*, by the *deserts of his servants*. "Blessed," says he, "are those servants whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching: verily I say unto you, *that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them*."—Luke xii. 37.

Believer, be sure the loving Jesus meant no harshness to you, when He said, "doth he thank that servant?" any more than he meant any harshness to his mother, when he said of his true disciples, that they were "his mother, and sister, and brother." He wishes to guard you from a great peril. He wishes to save you from yourself; but oh, there is no service so full of unutterable joy as his; it is indeed "perfect freedom." The smile of your master's countenance follows the faithful one in the discharge of all his duty. The kind and loving presence, help, protection, and forbearance of that master, makes even the heaviest burden a light one, and refreshes you even in the heat of a long day of hard labor and unceasing toil. And then at length, though when your crown is gained, you will have to cast it at his feet, and say, "Thou art worthy," yet will he not for your profitableness, but out of the fullness of his heart's love take you to himself, and be graciously pleased to say in your ears, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

How faithfully then do these last two parables present befor-

us, as in a picture, man's utter helplessness in his sad condition. Like the blind man, he lacks *wisdom*—spiritual wisdom—the power of discerning the things of God. His natural mind can not grasp these things. Then, as an unprofitable servant, he lacks the *power* to set himself right with God. He has no ability to perform a work of supererogation—so that he shall have something in hand, something to spare, which may properly form the basis of an agreement on any terms with God. He is in himself utterly helpless, because he has neither the *wisdom* nor the *power* to deliver himself out of the evil state in which sin and Satan have placed him; and here then would the history of man gather eternal blackness, as one generation after another passed away in despair, were it not that on the dark foreground of the picture there falls a bright beam of light—not like a lurid, fitful gleam from smoldering embers beneath, but steady, and clear, and hopeful, as it slants down from heaven by the edge of the everlasting hills. True light, real heat, it brings to the dark and the dreary dwellings of the lost, the guilty, and the helpless—for it tells of "CHRIST CRUCIFIED," "*the wisdom of* GOD," and "*the power of* GOD."

And here the parables which have special reference to the kingdom of darkness are closed. The sombre picture has revealed deep shadows in the condition of poor, guilty, sinful man. His corrupt heart with its polluting stream—his spiritual darkness and disease—his thraldom under Satan—the varied and deadly evidences of all this—the imminent peril in consequence—and his utter inability to deliver himself. It must not, however, be supposed that even this dark account which we have reckoned up presents us with a full or complete view of his character, his ways, or his destiny. We can only gain a thorough knowledge of these by carefully examining those other parables which have specially to do with the kingdom of Christ. There, when we shall discover that the very light which has sprung up from Calvary, and which is yet to cover the earth with its robe of righteousness, serves but to detect and to bring out more fully and specifically the deadly nature of sin, and the terrible power which Satan exerts over his victim, we shall be all the more ready to set our seal to the truth of God's word, in its description

of that abominable thing which God hates—of that adversary, that as a roaring lion goeth about seeking whom he may devour—and of the infinite power, wisdom, and love of that being who has broken the snare, and delivered the poor captive out of the hands of the fowler.—(Appendix B.)

PART II.

THE PRINCE OF THE KINGDOM OF LIGHT.

CHAPTER I.

THE DOOR—THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

In the former part of this volume, it was the wretched slave, the unhappy victim in the kingdom of darkness, which first claimed our attention. In proceeding now to inquire into the teaching of the parables regarding the kingdom of light, it is the King, not the subject, which must first claim our attention. The Prince of Darkness could have had no power over man had the latter not willingly entered his dominion, and thus it is the course and condition of man that forms the essential part of that history, so far as we have to do with it. On the other hand, were it not for the direct interposition, both as regards power and love, on the part of the Prince of Peace and Light, man never could become his subject, or enter into his happy kingdom—and, therefore the leading topic which must now engage our attention is this "King of Glory," his offices and his character, and all his work which he has performed, and is still performing, for those whom he has brought under his mild, holy and happy sway.

The first view which we desire to take of this glorious Being, who restores that which is fallen, builds up that which otherwise would continue a ruinous heap, and leads captivity captive, is derived from the striking parable we find in the Gospel of John.

"*Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice:*

and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers."—John x. 1–5.

Let it be noted, that in these verses our Lord has not as yet introduced any direct mention of himself, nor does he mix up with the external figure here introduced, any of the deep spiritual truths it is intended to illustrate. He is merely giving us a parable which must have been matter of every-day observation by the parties he was addressing. He alludes to a large sheep-fold, a place where sheep may be housed in safety. He refers to the fact, admitted by all, that the regular and proper mode of access is by the door. He reminds them that there is a porter at the door, whose duty it is to attend to it—to keep it shut for the security of the sheep within, and to open it to the shepherds when they come for their sheep. Now, if any one were seen endeavoring to make his way into the fold otherwise than by the door, he would at once be regarded as coming with an unlawful object, and would be dealt with as a thief or a robber; but when the lawful shepherds came, the porter would at once admit them by the door. The parable is further based upon what was usual in the East then, and is so still, namely, that one fold was often made the place of safety for several flocks belonging to different shepherds. And thus we have the simple, every-day occurrence under such circumstances beautifully told. When a shepherd enters in by the door, the first thing he does is "*he calleth* HIS OWN *sheep by name, and leadeth them out.*" Then "*he goeth before them,*" and "*the sheep follow him,*" for "*they know his voice.*" And if any body came by, and endeavored to draw them away by calling them, or to force them on before him, "*they will not follow him,*" but "*flee from him;*" for "*they know not the voice of strangers.*"

Such is the parable. Our gracious Master has been pleased to give us the key to its full and clear interpretation. In entering upon this, it is well to observe the main scope of the parable. "The sheep throughout this parable are not the mingled multitude of good and bad; but the *real* sheep, the faithful, who *are* what all in the fold *should be.* The false sheep (*goats*, Matt. xxv. 32) do not appear; for it is not the character of the *flock*, but that

of the *shepherd*, and the relation between him and his sheep which are here prominent."*

What, then, does the parable tell us of Christ? He himself has given us in a simple and wondrous order what he means to convey to us regarding himself. "By me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." Observe these three things,—1. The entering in for safety. 2. The going in and out safely and freely. 3. The finding pasture.

"*Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep.*" He prefaces the statement as he was wont to do when anxious to impress a very solemn truth upon his hearers, "*Verily, verily, I say unto you.*" Listen to this, reader. He who is the truth and can not lie, is saying something of eternal moment to your soul. He is speaking of safety from wrath—from all the dangers and the horrors of being left in utter darkness. He is telling you of what is of the *first* importance, if you would live and not die—"I am the door of the sheep."

The sheep here spoken of are, as we have seen, the true people of God, the real servants of Christ. They are not, therefore, the mingled throng of evil and good that are found in the visible church of Christ on earth. They are the "Church of the first born, which are written in heaven"—the mystical body of Christ —the "Lamb's bride." Their place of safety—the fold which shelters them, where they can rest in peace—which surrounds them one every side—which keeps off all that would harm them —is the everlasting power of Jehovah. They "dwell in the secret place of the Most High," and "abide under the shadow of the Almighty." *There* is their fold, their "quiet habitation," their "sure resting-place." Within the circle of that home, they "shall not be afraid for the arrow that flieth by day, nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness, nor for the destruction that wasteth at noon-day. A thousand shall fall at their side, and ten thousand at their right hand; but it shall not come nigh them." Now, of this wall of salvation round about, Christ is "*the door.*"

By this, he first gives us to understand, that it is not in the spiritual fold to which he is referring as in the common folds in their sight, which suggested the parable. In the one case, there

* Alford *in loco.*

might be different flocks with their several shepherds; in the case illustrated, there is but one flock and one shepherd; this flock entering in by the door Christ; and every one who thus enters "*is saved.*" So that this is the marked feature of every one within the fold—he is a *saved* soul. Here, then, we have Christ in his great and glorious character of Saviour. "He shall be called Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." "Him hath God exalted at his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel, and remission of sins." "I am *the* door." There is none other—no other way of access unto God, his favor, and his light—no other way of escape from wrath and death. "There is no other name given among men whereby we must be saved, but the name of Jesus." Man placed in Paradise, with every thing around him made to minister to his enjoyment, yet indulged in evil thoughts, and so broke out of the enclosure of God's love, and favor and protection. Nor could he retrace his steps. *That* road was guarded by the cherubim with the flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life. "A *new* and a *living* way," however, has been consecrated for him by the blood of Jesus. And now the Second Adam—the Lord from heaven—invites him by his voice, and draws him to the door by which he may enter in, and be saved. "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Then notice this, "if *any* man enter in, he shall be saved." Here is the blessed intimation for all the hapless and the helpless sons of men—all who are under darkness and in the shadow of death. This door is not for righteous, but for sinners—not for those who need no salvation, but for those who do. This door is not meant for such only as are of one class or degree in sin, but for all who will flee from the wrath to come, and partake of the safety to which it leads and which it secures. "If *any* man"—it is open for one and all who apply for admittance. Any poor sinner that cries sincerely, and knocks heartily, shall enter in and be saved. It is as good for the persecuting Saul as for the loving John; and it is as needful for John as for Saul. It stands as wide for the penitent robber expiring on the cross as it did for the inquiring Nicodemus, who came privately to Jesus; and Nicodemus must look at it as steadily, and enter it as humbly as the

penitent robber. This is the great glory of Christ—to be the door, by "whom, whosoever cometh unto God, shall *in no wise* be cast out." It is thus that he reverses man's own suicidal act, when he destroys himself. It is thus that he plucks the sinner as a brand from the burning, and saves with an everlasting salvation.

Further, observe what is intimated to us by this declaration of our Lord, "*I am the door, by me, if any man enter, he shall be saved.*" "*Saved!*" saved from Satan—saved from the wrath of God—saved from sin, from its power, its pollution, as well as its guilt! Who can do all this but God? He, then, who calls himself "the door," is a *Prince* as well as a Saviour. He has power with God and can prevail. Though he chooses to empty himself of his reputation, and make himself manifest in the humble character of the mere door by which his people are to enter into safety and rest, yet he thinks it "no robbery to be equal with God." Yea, even in the body of his humiliation, as the door of escape for sinners, he has wrought such glorious things that in *that* character we are told "God hath also highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name; that at the name of *Jesus* every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that *Jesus* Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Reader, be well assured of this, that if we would know any thing truly of God, or truth, or holiness—if we would know what Heaven is by its possession, and what hell would be, by the discovery of what they have forfeited who are there—if we would know peace which passeth understanding, and which can not be taken away—if we would know what it is to cry, "Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory," as the world is sinking beneath our feet, and eternity throwing wide her gates to unvail the profound depths which lie in her domain—if we would know all this, we must first of all *know* Christ as "the door." Be sure that you have Him, and you are sure of all the rest: "All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours, for ye are Christ's, (his saved ones by entering in at the door,) and Christ is God's.

But again, our Lord adds, "*He shall go in and out;*" and, in this part of the interpretation which he has been pleased to give us, he appears before us in that most loved and lovely of all his

characters, of which there is so much said and implied throughout the whole of the inspired word of God—the Shepherd of the sheep. In dealing with a parable which furnishes us with even a faint illustration of what Christ is, we must bear in mind what good John Bunyan says: "First I would premise, that He of whom I am about to speak, hath not His fellow." And so, from the very greatness and glory of Him who is set forth in this parable, and the utter insufficiency of any one figure to furnish a full resemblance, we must endeavor to look at it from various points of view. We must first, as it were, take it up in one way, and when we have seen what it means, set it down, and take it up in another, without allowing the first view to complicate or interfere with the second. Thus we regard this parable first and simply with reference to the *door*. Christ says He is that which is represented by the door. Well, after having considered this, we must, as it were, forget for the moment *that* part of the illustration, and pass to the second; and here Christ is the Shepherd. "*I am*," says he, "*the good Shepherd;*" "*by me*" shall my flock "*go in and out.*" "*I am the good Shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.*" Like the ordinary shepherd in the parable, He "*calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.*" "*He goeth before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.*"

And it is in this second view which the parable furnishes us of Christ, that our attention is specially directed to the contrast which he draws in it in such remarkable language. He describes to his hearers what was well understood by them. If any one were found seeking an entrance into a fold, except by the lawful door, he would be regarded as dishonest, as "*a thief or a robber.*" Well, then, he adds, "*All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers.*" It is alone He that entereth in by the lawful door, who is "the Shepherd of the sheep." This he did; but who, then, are the "thieves and robbers who came before him?" It is impossible to limit these words to the few isolated attempts which were made previous to the coming of Christ, by false pretenders to the office of Messiah. The words will not admit of such restriction, "*all* that *ever* came *before* me," &c. They must refer to all false teachers of every age and of every kind. Nor can we avoid marking what appears to be the original of the contrast between the good Shepherd and these "thieves and robbers," in the conversa-

tion between our Lord and the leaders of the Jewish people in the preceding chapter but one. *They*, the self-constituted guides and teachers of Israel, were delighted to be styled Rabbi, professed to be the chosen seed of Abraham, and vainly boasted of their extraction from that patriarch. But Christ tells them, by their works they dishonored their profession, for "Abraham rejoiced to see my day"—the day of the good Shepherd—"he saw it and was glad." Not only so, but he tells them plainly what their real condition is, in what family they are, and from what parentage they are sprung. "Ye are of your father, the devil;" "he is a liar and a murderer from the beginning." Yes, here was the first "thief and robber," who endeavored to get into the fold "*some other way*" than by the known and lawful one. All who have sought to lead astray, whether spirits of darkness or fallen men, are but the followers, the children, the imitators of this great adversary, this head and front of "all subtilty and all mischief." He and they have never ceased their efforts to rob God of his sheep, "*to steal, and to kill, and to destroy.*" They are "treacherous dealers, who deal very treacherously."

And when it is added that "*the sheep did not hear them*," this is not meant in an absolute sense; for, alas, who among the children of God that has not at one time or another listened to the Syren voice of the tempter, and been ready often and often to yield to the subtle wiles which would draw away from safety, life and peace for ever? What our Lord would convey by this is, that none of *his* people, none of *his* flock, none that *know* him really, and are *known* of him, none whom he calls by name, and who really love *his* voice and follow him, none of them ever heard so as to be finally drawn away and lost. The voice of temptation very often has reached them. They have often rashly listened, and the longer they did so were the less able to distinguish whose voice it was; but the good Shepherd never left them to themselves. He with his rod and staff "restored their souls," and ceased not "to lead them in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake."

Those of whom he speaks, then, "the thieves and robbers," are primarily "the rulers of the darkness of this world," and subordinately "evil men and seducers, deceiving and being deceived." See the blessed contrast. "I am the *good* Shepherd,"

says Christ. Good indeed—unutterably good, for goodness is his essential attribute. He is goodness itself—good, because he has spared himself no cost, in order to promote the well-being of poor sinful man—good, because he does with his sheep whatever is for their best interests—good, because as he goes before them, he guides them safely, and is likewise their bright example; and because every one of his flock shall have cause to say at last, when they look back on all the care and love which he has shown to them as their Shepherd, "Surely goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

"*To him*," this good Shepherd, "*the porter openeth.*" Mark this well. The door into the sheepfold is thrown open, but it is to "*the Shepherd of the sheep.*" The flock, doubtless, enter in and go out by the door; but it is not they who open it, nor is it on their application that it is opened at all. It is unnecessary to inquire here whether any, and if any, which of the persons in the Trinity is specially meant by "the porter." It is enough for us to notice the great lesson of the parable which is so strongly enforced, namely, that while the door opens for the sheep to let them in, and "no man can shut" it, and is shut for their security when they *are* in, and "no man can open it;" all that they have to do with it, is to take advantage of what it offers to them, a way in, and security when in. They did not make the door, nor find it when it was made, nor open it when it was found. All this is done for them, and it is to their good and loving Shepherd that the porter attends, and does exactly as he requires, in either opening or shutting "with the key of David."

And then the sheep "*go in and out.*" There is something peculiarly significant in the language. The sheep, first of all, go in by the door, that they may be *saved*. Then, when once in, and under the rule and guidance of the good Shepherd, they "*go in and out.*" This shows us the perfect freedom of the service of Christ. He brings salvation to us—he surrounds us with its walls and bulwarks; but this is just in other words the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free. His sheep, indeed, are never without him, for they only follow as he leads, and listen to his voice; and thus they are ever safe—none dares to make them afraid when he is by their side; but where he is, there is "*liberty.*"

Let this not be forgotten. The salvation to which Christ admits his people is not a bondage, but a deliverance from bondage. It is "the spirit of adoption" in exchange for "the spirit of fear." The saved soul does not feel as if a captive in its prison when it enters the fold, but has all the full assurance of everlasting safety, while it walks at liberty, or, as the Prophet has it, "Walks up and down in the name of the Lord."

And see here the blessed understanding mutually subsisting between Christ and his people. "*He calls his own sheep by name.*" They "*know his voice.*" "*He leadeth them out.*" "*They follow him.*" Here the strong and the weak are found together. Blessed communications of grace have passed from the one to the other. The Shepherd *calls.* What heavenly music in that voice when he speaks to his own! He calls his *own* sheep. They are his by right of purchase, and as such are very dear to him. How this endearment shows itself in such words as these, "Fear not, *little* flock!" He calls them all *by name.* Let not the humblest believer, the youngest child in the family of God fear, lest amid the flock which Christ has purchased, and the many names of honored sons to be found there, he should be forgotten. The Shepherd calls *him* by name, as well as others. No wonder that the receiver of such graces should "*know his voice,*" when he speaks so pleasingly, so tenderly, to the heart of each. And then following him is the result of this. "Whither thou goest, I will go," is the language of each of his chosen ones.

This communication of grace from Christ to his people, and their entire dependence on him, preserves them from strangers or hirelings. He has made himself so known to his people—all that he is to them, as well as what he has done for them, is so well understood by them, that they are at no loss to detect the voice of strangers, and flee from them. "*That* is not the *Gospel*, the sound of glad tidings, as my Shepherd has taught me, and I will have none of it," is the language of the enlightened child of God. "If any man preach any other gospel, (which is not another,)" said one faithful member of the flock, "let him be accursed."

Such strangers or hirelings as these have always their own purpose to serve; but they care nothing for the real safety and prosperity of the sheep. The prophets Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and

Zechariah have given awful descriptions of such false shepherds. In the time of danger they leave the sheep—"not the sheep of the fold" spoken of as belonging to Christ, because he says, "*they* hear not" these strangers, but such as are tempted to follow them—men who yield to their seductive teaching and influence. These are deserted by them in the time of need. When the hireling "seeth the wolf coming, he fleeth, and the wolf catcheth them and scattereth the flock."

Our Lord, in alluding to these hirelings, takes occasion from their conduct to introduce the great and crowning excellence of his faithful, tender, and loving work as "*the good Shepherd.*" The hireling fleeth when he sees the wolf coming. He cares not for the *flock*, but for *himself.* They may all be devoured for what he cares, only let him be safe. The wolf may have their lives, if only he may be delivered from his fangs. Not so the faithful Shepherd. Look at a real case in point. David kept his father's sheep—not a hireling—but a son, having a direct interest in the flock, and there came out a lion and a bear, and the young shepherd ran up and slew them both, and delivered his flock "out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear." In doing so he of course put his own life in peril, in order to guard that which was intrusted to him; and so our Lord, with this part of a faithful shepherd's work before the minds of the people, says of himself, not merely that he *risks* his life for his flock, but "*the good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.*" "*I* lay down," he adds, "my life for the sheep."

It is surely not pressing the interpretation here too far, to take the statement of our Lord as in immediate connection with what he suggests in the figure—the wolf attacking a flock, and a hireling fleeing in order to save his life. The good Shepherd is not like him, but "gives his life for the sheep." Who is the wolf? It can mean only the great adversary of souls. Just as Satan is represented in one view of the parable as "a thief and a robber," endeavoring to steal into the fold; so now, when the flock are in the field, he is set forth as a wolf ready to devour them. Our Lord Jesus Christ, then, had to encounter this enemy, because he would deliver the prey out of his teeth; and in this encounter he did not merely *risk* his life, but he "gave" it. He not merely undertook a dangerous mission, but one which he knew must

issue in his own death; and thus the enemy seemed at first to gain the advantage over him. "The serpent bruised his heel." The wolf succeeded in slaying the shepherd. But out of this weakness came forth strength. "I lay my life down," he says, "that *I might take it again;*" and thus he totally defeated his enemy, and "led captivity captive." He laid down his life *for* his sheep; in other words, "He died for the sins" of his people; and he "rose again" to bind Satan forever in chains of darkness, and to justify his people before his Father. This was not a duty which was forced upon him. This was not a positive injunction laid upon a creature, which he must fulfill or be disobedient. It was his *voluntary* act. He loved his sheep. He must secure their safety. He must deliver them from Satan. He must give them the blessing of "*going in and out*," freely and happily; and so he says, "I lay down my life," for "no man taketh it from me," but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." And, as if to bind our hearts in wonder, love, and praise to him who thus deals with his sheep, he singles this out as pre-eminently the thing which draws forth the whole love of his Father toward himself. "*Therefore* doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again."

But further, observe the assurance our Lord gives that as the good Shepherd he not only leads his people "in and out" in safety and freedom, but provides "*pasture*" for them. They "*find pasture.*" A plentiful supply for all their wants is provided by him. "Of his fullness" all his people receive largely and liberally, and "grace for grace." The child of God can take up the language of David, and say, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He prepareth a table before me in the presence of mine enemies, he anointeth my head with oil; my cup runneth over." We shall have to notice hereafter what these "green pastures" and "still waters" are which the good Shepherd causes his people to find.

And then, again, it is important to observe that all this so done —so well done by the Shepherd for his flock, is in entire accordance with the character and will of his Father. Just as the shepherd uses the right place of entrance—the door, and does not climb up into the fold, or pull part of it down in order to enter,

even thus it is with Christ. He did not himself enter within the true fold—the grace, favor, and protection of his heavenly Father —and take sinners with him there, otherwise than by the lawful door. He did not get over any of God's commandments, making them, as it were, of little account—he did not put them under his feet in order to attain his end, nor did he make a breach in God's holy and perfect law. He came not as a "thief or robber;" on the contrary, his entering in with his flock, and his leading them in and out, have been openly done, and with no damage to the law and the honor of his Father. He came by the *proper* door—perfect sinless obedience to God; and so he "magnified the law and made it honorable." And therefore did his Father "love him," because the violence he did was not on holiness, justice, or truth—not on the eternal walls which surrounded the Throne and the glory of God, but on himself. He did not lay down truth, but he laid down his own life. He did not sacrifice justice, but he sacrified himself. He did not win his way into the fold in spite of holiness, but because he was "holy, harmless, and undefiled." He was just such an high-priest as could offer a full atonement for sin, and, being "consecrated for us," secure the eternal holiness of his people.

And how strikingly is this entire accordance with the character and will of his Father, in all that was done by the good Shepherd, intimated to us in these precious verses, where Jesus seems to bring within the compass of a few words the most delightful and blessed view of this work for his people. "My sheep," he says, "hear my voice; and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life: and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand: my Father which gave them me is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." This work of the Son of God is so precious in the sight of the Father that when he was engaged in it he declared from heaven, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." It is in such strict accordance with the Father's will and character, that, as regards this loved and precious flock, Christ says, "all mine are thine, and thine are mine." And so he adds, in the chapter before us, "I and my Father are one," implying, doubtless, that the two persons of the Godhead here mentioned are *one* in essence, but specially and primarily in

this connection, manifesting the oneness of love, purpose, and power, on the part of Father and Son, in keeping, guarding, and holding fast possession of every member of their beloved flock.

These, then, are the great truths illustrated by this parable. It tells us what the Prince of the Kingdom of Light is. *First,* a Saviour—he is the door into the sheepfold; *next,* the good Shepherd—he leads his flock as a shepherd, and provides full pasture for them, having laid down his life for them, in order to purchase their safety at this cost All this, too, is done according to truth and justice; and so he can point to it as manifesting forth this eternal glory of the Godhead, "I and my Father are one."

CHAPTER II.

THE TRUE VINE.

We proceed further to inquire into what the parables shadow forth to us of the great Prince of the Kingdom of Light. And precious as the view is which the parable in the preceding chapter gives us of him as the way of salvation, and the Shepherd of the sheep—glorious as the relationship therein represented is which he has been pleased to form with his people, we have now to regard him under another figure chosen by himself, in order to shadow forth a still deeper and more precious truth regarding his connection with those whom he saves, and who are to behold his glory forever. The sheep going in at the door for safety, and being carefully tended by the good Shepherd, have yet nothing in common with the door or the Shepherd. By the one they are admitted, by the other guarded, led, and nourished, and thus inestimable blessings are by these figures shadowed forth in the most attractive manner, but still they imply nothing in common between the two parties. They suggest danger and helplessness in the one, they set forth the means of safety and protection by the other; but they do no more. Now, however, we shall see these two parties, the Saviour and his saved ones—the Shepherd and his sheep—not simply as *conferring* and receiving blessings, but as being, in the most intimate and wonderful manner, identified with each other. It is possible to conceive of Christ, the Prince of the Kingdom of Light, becoming the means of escape to his people, and undertaking to be their Shepherd, and yet not coming nearer to them than these figures denote; but he has given us another which marks explicitly that he is not only near to them, but actually one with them. Listen to him, as he comforted and taught his faithful ones, on the night he was betrayed.

"*I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.*"—John xv. 1.

Our Lord selects the image here from fruit-bearing trees, and among these from the noblest, the most beautiful and graceful, and which has ever been esteemed most highly among men—the vine. He implies that the vine to which he refers is planted in a vineyard, and that it is carefully tended by a husbandman.

Directly applying the figure to himself in the way of allegory, he says, "*I am the true vine*," not the *vine of truth*, which yields a cold and frigid sense, and is not allowable. "*The true*" is that "not only by which prophecy is fulfilled"—not only "in which the organism and qualities of the vine are most nobly realized," (Tholuck,) but, as in chapter i. 9, "*original*," "*archetypal*."* It is here just as in the case of Moses and the tabernacle. The prophet gained his insight into the proper frame and form of the tabernacle which he was to make on earth, by the pattern which he was permitted to behold in heaven. He first saw the original, and then proceeded to execute his copy. The archetype came first, the type afterward. So here we have the great original archetype—Christ. And the vine which we see rising from the ground at our feet, and hanging its beauteous branches, laden with luscious fruit, is the mere type of this "*True Vine*," made, prepared, set in this world, and all its construction and habits arranged by the God of nature, to be a fitting emblem of his more precious plant in the kingdom of grace.

And when our Lord assumed this figure to himself in this striking language, we are led at once to some important and most precious conclusions. The emblem of a vine is one of very frequent occurrence in the Old Testament. Let two references to these suffice. In Psalm lxxx., the writer speaks in very striking and highly poetical language of Israel being brought out of Egypt by Jehovah, with a high hand and an outstretched arm, planted in the land of Canaan, and there fostered and cherished by the love and power of her great King. All this is graphically set forth under the image of a vine. "Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt; thou hast cast out the heathen and planted it. Thou preparedst room before it, and didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land. The hills were covered with the

* Alford *in loco*.

shadow of it, and the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars. She sent out her boughs unto the sea, and her branches unto the river." Glorious as *this* vine was, it was not the "*true vine*." Its "hedges were broken down." It was "burned with fire." It was "cut down."

Again, in the fifth chapter of Isaiah, we have a parable with its interpretation given, in which the vine is the figure used: "My well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: and he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with *the choicest vine*, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a wine-press therein; and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes." Neither then was this the "*true vine*," seeing it brought forth "wild grapes." And although the reference is primarily made to this vine in its then degraded state, as bringing forth "wild grapes," and it is said "that the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant," yet must we not omit to notice that the expression in the parable, "the choicest vine," evidently refers to the parent stock from which this degenerate vine had sprung—that is Abraham. Just as the Prophet Jeremiah also manifestly alludes to him, "Yet I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me?"* And thus we gather that while Israel and Judah in their apostasy and rebellion, though likened to a vine, were not the "*true vine*," so likewise Abraham himself, though the friend of God, though the father of the faithful—one of all men most signally honored by tokens of God's favor and love; though he was indeed a "choice plant," a "noble vine," "wholly a right seed," was, nevertheless, not the "*true vine*"—not the great original of which the vine is but a type, but only as standing midway between the one and the other, and catching some faint features of resemblance from them both.

Unless we bear these things distinctly in mind, we shall fail to have a just conception of the impression made on the minds of those who heard him, when our Lord said to the true disciples who then alone surrounded him, but who were all Jews, children of the stock of Abraham, and who even then were disposed to

* Jeremiah ii. 21.

cling with bigoted tenacity to the mere fact of their outward extraction from Abraham. "I am the *true vine*." It was, in truth, the counterpart to that other declaration of his to the assembled Jews, "Before Abraham was, I am." On that occasion he distinctly affirmed his superiority to Abraham in one sense. In the parable before us he as distinctly asserts his superiority in another.

For, notice the truth which underlies all this. Just as the vine had been often used in the Old Testament Scriptures to denote Abraham, or the house of Israel, so now the Saviour adopts the same image to denote his manhood. It is to this that the parable mainly points. It is on this the great facts depend which are illustrated by it. The husbandman prepares room for his plant, and he sets it in the place thus made ready. So the Father sent his Son into the world, having "prepared a body" for him. "When the fullness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law." This Son of God made man, "bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh," was not, like Abraham, to give birth to a degenerate race, but every one who claimed sonship from him should be a "king and a priest unto God and the Father forever." "He shall have dominion from sea to sea and from the river unto the ends of the earth." This is the "*true vine*," the humanity of Jesus, which has been set and planted in this world, that it may yield plenteous fruit to the heavenly husbandman, even "fruit that shall remain"—yea, "fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the praise and glory of God."

But observe this special feature in the parable before us. He who prepared the vine in the kingdom of his providence to illustrate the human nature of his own Son in the kingdom of grace, chose to make this beauteous and fruitful tree dependent on something else for its support. The vine needs to be trained on something stronger than itself, otherwise it will lie prostrate on the ground, wither and die, and be utterly worthless. So also with Christ. Had there been manhood *only* in him, he never could have done what he did, nor brought honor and glory to God as he has done. And just as our idea of a beautiful and fertile vine must always arise from seeing it held up and supported by something else, foreign to it, and yet united with it, so

we never can realize Christ as the "*true vine*" otherwise than as the Man "in whom dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily," —who in his own person combines two natures, perfectly distinct from each other, and yet perfectly united in him, "very God and very man." In the first of these he is apart from us all. We can have nothing in common with it. In the other he has come down to our level, in order that perfect union may exist between us. And thus he proceeds to say—

"*I am the vine and ye are the branches.*"—John xv. 5.

Here, then, we have the intimate union between Christ and his people shadowed forth. He is not now merely "the door by which they enter in and are saved," nor even as "the good shepherd," with whom they "go in and out, and find pasture," and who even "lays down his life for the sheep," but he is one with them, and they with him. Just as the branch and the stem are one, so Christ and his people are one. One nature is common to both. And as the branches of the vine are in the place where the vine is planted, so Christ and his people have one vineyard in which they flourish. And as the sap rises up in the stem and thence through the branches, so it is the self-same spirit which dwelt "without measure" in Christ, and "by which he offered himself without spot to God," in order to atone for his people, which also works *in measure* in the people thus saved, and causes them to bring forth precious fruit to the praise of God.

So far, generally, as regards the figure selected by our Lord. He means to set forth the point of union between himself and his people. "Verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham." But another question is here suggested. What special view of this union is meant to be given? Obviously "*the vine and the branches*" represent Christ and his *visible* church. The mystical or invisible church can not be intended here, because there are unfruitful branches, that are broken off, withered, and cast into the fire. But we must take care while asserting this, that we do not, as some have done, carelessly apply an epithet to Christ in connection with the figure before us which is altogether alien from it, and which suggests what is unscriptural and dangerous. "The vine," it has been said, "is the *visible church* here, of which *Christ is the inclusive Head.* And so 'the vine and the branches' answer to the Head and

members, in Eph. v. 23, 30; Col. ii. 19." There is no scriptural warrant for the mixing up of these two perfectly distinct things.

In the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians, the Apostle more than once makes reference to the church of God in close and intimate union with Christ under the figure of "the body," with its various members, and Christ the Head of it. God the Father, as we are told, "hath put all things under his feet, and given him to be the Head over all things to the church, which is his body: the fullness of him that filleth all in all." These and the other references which he makes to the church under the figure of a body, are obviously meant to bring it under our notice in its purely mystical character—"the whole company of the redeemed"—the "called, and chosen, and faithful"—those "who endure unto the end, and are saved." The figure itself demands this interpretation. A little reflection will prove this. The people of God are represented as the members of a body—"members in particular;" *i. e.*, each one, as it were, stands in a relative position to Christ as the several members of a body do to its head. No doubt, if a member of a body become incurably diseased, it is removed. A hand or a foot may be taken off, so as to check the spread of a disease which might prove fatal to the whole body. But what then? This very excision of the diseased member leaves the body maimed and mutilated. It may be saved from death, it is true, but it has lost its symmetry, its proportion, and its beauty; and thus to say that "we are members of Christ's body, of his flesh and of his bones"—that "he is the Head, and we are the members"—and that, after all, many of these members become so corrupt as to be cut off and cast away altogether, destroys the force and beauty of the image, and is revolting to the spiritual apprehension. No! The union between Christ and his people, as the Head with the members of one body, is such, that when they once belong to him, they are his forever—not to be cut off again, and so leave the Head spoiled of his members, but vivified by his life-giving, healing Spirit, "till we *all* come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto *a perfect man*—unto the measure of the stature (or age) of the fullness of Christ."

On the other hand, notice the wonderful accuracy of the imagery of Scripture. The vine and the branches represent, not

the "church of the first-born, written in heaven," not the "new," the "holy Jerusalem:" but the visible church on earth, wherein the evil has been and always will be mingled with the good. It is not here, then, as in the figure of a human body. If a branch that is dried, withered, or worthless, be removed, the tree is improved by such a process, not mutilated. It is no loss, but the contrary, to a vine, for the useless, fruitless branches to be taken away, in order to make room for the enlargement of its fruitful boughs, that they may be trained and spread in the very place where the barren ones were, and so a plentiful increase be drawn for the use of the husbandman: and thus, too, in the visible Church, the removal from time to time of that which is worthless, and the final cutting away of every branch that bears no fruit, far from impairing, will only issue in the perfect beauty and full excellence of the "*true vine*" and his fruitful branches.

No doubt, in both figures, there is something which they have in common;—the life of the plant in the one, the life of the body in the other. The stem and the branches share in the one, the head and the members in the other. But this is indeed slender ground on which to conclude that both the one and the other represent the church under one and the same aspect, in one and the same condition! On the contrary, a single glance will suffice to lead us to the very opposite conclusion, even apart from the reasons urged above. The one, we should be disposed to say, tells us of some kind of union with Christ, which may either be accompanied by fruit-bearing or barrenness, and so one branch may after all be destitute of what another has; the other tells us of a union, so close, so vital, so particular, that every member must in *every* respect fully share in that very life which is common to all.

And here it may be well to enter a protest against a certain ecclesiastical terminology, which, whether it has been originally derived from the imagery in the chapter before us or not, has assuredly no Scripture warrant to support it, and which has imperceptibly led to much that is to be deplored in the history of the Church of Christ, and which to this moment stands as a special perplexity in the way of full and satisfactory views concerning that Church. We are perpetually hearing of the "universal church," and that one church or another, peculiar to some

country or place, is, or is not a *branch* of this universal church. Now in one respect there may be no harm in such application of this term; but when it is attempted to convert a mere phrase into something more, and to give the language a specialty involving things of such tremendous moment, as that, if a man belongs to one particular communion, he is "within the covenanted mercies of God," *because* that communion is "a branch of the Church catholic," while another is *not* within the pale of these covenanted mercies, because the communion in which he is, is *not* a branch of the Church catholic, then indeed it is time to protest against the use of language which, to the unreflecting, assumes so much of weight and solemn importance, and which often produces fatal impressions on the souls of men.

Let it then be distinctly noted, that there is no Scripture warrant whatever for calling any communion by the name of "a branch." Our Lord did not address his faithful ones thus—"I am the vine," and ye are a branch, but "*ye are* THE BRANCHES." There is no such use of the term found throughout the Gospels, the Acts, the Epistles, or the Revelation. If we are to use the term at all, as significant of any thing connected with spiritual things, let us do it as it is set forth here. Each *man* who makes a profession of faith in Jesus is a branch of the vine. The only thing which will eventually make the distinction between the branches, so that some shall remain and others be burned, is *fruit* or *no* fruit. It is *individual* connection, either of a nominal or a real character, with Christ which is meant by the use of this figure. Our Lord condescends not to notice the walls of separation which men have set up, and then prided themselves in belonging to their own little area, as if it were nearer and dearer to Christ than that in which their neighbors live. He looks over all these, and he speaks to *each man*, and he tells him, "If you are fruitful, *well.* If not, you shall be cut off. No connection with what you call a true Church, or a true and apostolic branch of the Church, is of any account in this matter. What you have to think about and take care of, is your *personal* connection with *me*, and the result of it in your own individual life, conduct, and conversation. If fruit be not found in *these* things—if your heart remains unsanctified, your life unchanged, if you walk not in God's ways, and seek not to do what alone is right

before him, and to be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, bringing forth fruit in due season, then, no matter what your communion may be, though it be one which, if Paul were on earth, he would prefer to all others, that will be of no avail to you. You shall be cut off, cast away, left to wither and die. But if, on the other hand, true graces are found in you, my image in your soul, the work of faith, the labor of love, the patience of hope, then it is not the numberless errors which may exist in the communion to which you belong that will prevent me from owning you at last as my own, and as one of those 'whose fruit shall remain.'"

Of course, this can not for a moment furnish any just plea for remaining carelessly in a communion, which, however it may profess to hold the fundamentals of the faith, has yet fatally departed from them in practice. The scope and bearing of the figure under review does not touch that at all; it has nothing to do with it. And, on the other hand, it as little furnishes a plea for our necessarily regarding every man as an alien and an outcast from Christ, merely on the ground of his being associated externally with that which is in reality unscriptural and unsound.

And thus the argument of certain parties falls harmlessly to the ground, who reason thus—"You admit," say they, "that there are to be found in the Romish communion those who are truly the people of God. You admit that there is some of the wheat there which shall at last be gathered into the heavenly garner. Well, then, it follows that the communion to which these justified ones belong, though it may be, and undoubtedly is, in many respects corrupt, is nevertheless a true and proper branch of Christ's Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church." It is easy to see that by this plausible reasoning there is substantially a glossing over of the real character of that communion altogether. But the view which this parable gives us will lead to a very different statement of the case. "We do admit that there are true believers within the fold of the Church of Rome. We do admit that God has his chosen ones there, whom he will watch over and keep unto life eternal, for 'the Lord knoweth them that are his.' Each one of these is a fruit-bearing branch of the '*true vine*.' But as to the system with which they are externally connected, it has nothing to do with Christ or Christ's

Church. It is a contradiction in terms, and a mockery of God, and is only calculated to delude and mislead the unwary, to call it 'a branch of Christ's Holy Catholic Apostolic Church.' No! We say of such men as Pascal or Martin Boos, 'By their fruit ye know them,' as 'branches.' You can distinguish their individual incorporation into Christ, and their partaking of the life-giving Spirit of him to whom they really belong; but of the system *in* which they were found, but *of* which they were not, we desire to speak as Scripture speaks, and as the Reformers in the sixteenth century spake, and we call that system not 'a branch of Christ's Church,' but Babylon the Great, the Mother of Abominations, the Great Apostasy, Antichrist, whose head in no sense is Christ, but, on the contrary, 'The Man of Sin, and the Son of Perdition.'"

But the figure of the vine and the branches, as dwelt upon by our Lord, suggests some further truths. As regards Christ, we have seen that it indirectly though necessarily implies the Godhead, which in him supplied the infinite strength required for the great work in which he was engaged, while it directly represents the manhood of Christ clinging to that which is not mixed up with it, so as to be confounded with it or mistaken for it, but only united to it, in his person, so that he shall become while truly a man, yet such a man, as that all other men who are bound together with him in a living faith, shall partake of the power, the holiness, the loveliness, and the life which are in him. We have seen, likewise, that the figure before us has reference to Christ, and all those who profess his name, whether that profession be true or false, formal or sincere.

In this latter use of the figure, an identity between Christ and both these classes is implied, and it is interesting to observe wherein alone this identity consists. As one substance is common to a vine and its branches, so *the human nature* is common to Christ and every member of his visible church. But this is the only point of real connection between them. There is nothing else in common; and this seems to show the peculiar aptness of the figure here used. Some are startled by it at first, as wondering how false and godless men can ever in any sense by mere profession be called branches of the "*true vine*," but it is not by their profession that they are so. That profession, indeed, comes to be taken into account as we shall see, because our Lord is not

referring to those who never heard of him, but only to those who have; but it is not by their profession that they are branches of the vine; they are simply and solely regarded as such by reason of that human nature which is common to them and the Lord Jesus Christ as man, and, indeed, unless in the parables we found the illustration of this identity, we should miss a very important feature in the economy of grace, for it is this very identity in nature with *every* one to whom Christ comes offering salvation in his Gospel which makes apparent the deadly guilt and the awful condemnation of those who profess to receive him, and yet by their barrenness give the lie to their profession. He has taken their nature on himself before he offers them salvation, and the salvation he offers depends on this fact; and so, if they abide not in him, and bear fruit, they expose themselves to the terrible sentence which inevitably follows all such barrenness.

But we must now proceed to notice some points which our Lord brings before us in the course of his reference to the vine and the branches; and first, surely the very way in which he speaks to his Apostles on this occasion would lead us to conclude that he meant to establish a distinction between one set of branches and another—not simply in the fact of the one being fruitful, the other barren, for that is admitted; but as if one set, after all, were alone regarded by him as the branches, while he made, as it were, no account of the other. He had said to them, "Now ye are clean, through the word I have spoken unto you." Judas was no longer among them—that fruitless branch was, alas! regarded as already cut off and withered. The rest were clean by the blessed operation of the Holy Spirit in their hearts, bringing home the truth of Christ there. They were not merely outward followers; they were true disciples. They were such as he could speak to in this language, "I call you not servants," but "friends." They were his "disciples indeed." Well, then, when he had thus distinguished them as cleansed indeed, he adds, "*I am the vine, ye are the branches.*" Certainly this seems to intimate to us that He who "knew whom he had chosen," regarded only his *faithful ones* as *the* branches of the vine; that they were ever in his sight and esteemed by him, while he already regarded *all others* as if cut off, as they assuredly will at length be, if they abide not in Christ, and continue unfruitful.

In looking forward to this *final* condition of this "*true vine*" and its branches, and regarding it as if the time of its manifestation were already come, our Lord makes special reference to the act of the husbandman. The latter, when taking care of the vine which he has planted, sees to each branch, first of all that it be trained suitably; and that, according to its position in the vine, every thing shall be done with it which will give it full opportunity to bring forth fruit unto perfection. If, after having done what he can, he finds one branch remaining unfruitful, he removes it, and so makes room for other fruitful branches to occupy the space which had hitherto been filled to no purpose. And, on the other hand, if he finds some branches which are fruitful, but not as much so as they might be made, then he prunes off every thing that is rank and luxuriant in them, in order that they may bring forth more fruit.

Now, like this process of the husbandman with his vine, is the certain separation of those from Christ, who, although professing to be his, yet in works deny him, and also the equal certainty that nothing will be spared, whatever immediate pain or sorrow or distress it may cost to his own people, which, according to his infinite wisdom, he perceives will be instrumental in causing them to abound in every good word and work.

"*Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away.*" This he expresses more at large in the sixth verse. "*If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.*" These two things are identified by Christ in this discourse, the "bearing no fruit," and the "not abiding in him." It is a twofold description of the same character. It is regarding one and the same kind of professing Christians from two distinct points of view. The one has regard to what appears externally; the other takes note of what is within. And so, in reference to the first, there is great propriety in uniting with it the open judgment of God by reason of unfruitfulness—"He taketh it away"—and, in reference to the other, there is equal propriety in speaking of the final ruin as springing from the inner and fatal cause of "not abiding in Christ."

And it is in this expression, "abide," that there lies the real distinction between the branches in the "*true vine.*" They have

a common nature, but nothing more in common. The one *abide* in Christ, the other do *not abide* in him. It is impossible to express this in the parable otherwise than our Lord has done it, that is, by representing the *result* of such *abiding* or *not abiding* in him, namely, *fruitful* and *unfruitful* branches. But having marked the distinction, then, where there is a feature of analogy between the literal view and the figurative, he expressly calls upon us, by the use of the language now before us, to look beneath the surface and to trace out the hidden cause of all this. When, therefore, he says, "*Abide in me*," he means something more than merely the outward connection of the vine and the branch—he refers to the inner connection between himself and his people—their dwelling in him and he in them—their real spiritual apprehension of him as their life and their daily living in him, drawing from him actively and constantly their supplies of the spirit of grace, which will make them glorify God in their bodies and spirits, just as the fruitful branch of the vine draws secretly but steadily the living and fertilizing sap from the stem with which it is connected; and therefore, when he adds, "*If a man abide not in me*," he further means, that if a man does not *so* dwell in me, as to partake of all I have to give, and am willing to bestow—if he is satisfied with a mere outward connection, and has no living trust in me, so as to make me all in all to him—so as to lead him to apply to me continually for all things pertaining to life and godliness, then his unfruitfulness will be made manifest, and that man will be driven away in his wickedness.

It is surely a most unwarrantable use to make of this language of Christ to affirm that it gives any countenance to the opinion, that a true child of God may finally be cast away. "This verse," says one, "is a most important testimony against supralapsarian error, showing us *that falling from grace is possible*, and pointing out the steps of the fall;" and yet this same writer admits that the vine and the branches mean Christ and his *visible* Church, the latter containing both righteous and wicked. If the "falling from grace," here spoken of, mean merely the falling away from all the favor and grace which God shows to every man, when he lays the Gospel at his feet, and permits him in his providence to join himself to Him in an outward covenant, then there can be no objection taken to it; but if it means that one who has once

been made a child of God in Christ, who has undergone really in his heart the great change from death unto life, who has been really and truly born again of the Spirit of God, who has been able heartily to say, "My beloved is mine, and I am his;" that such an one as this may be cast forth as a branch and withered—then we deny the inference which is sought to be drawn from these words.

There is nothing in the language used to lead us to suppose that the *fruitful* branch can ever become unfruitful, but the reverse. *That* branch is "*purged that it may bring forth more fruit.*" There is nothing said by which we may conclude that one who abides in Christ at one time may not abide in him at all times. It does, indeed, intimate to us that there can be no fruit without abiding in Christ, and that the end of this must be destruction, but it does no more. When Christ says, "Ye can not bear fruit, *except ye abide in me*," he does not mean that they may fall away, but he simply marks out to them the ground on which alone they can be faithful, true, and fruit-bearing. It is one thing to bring out clearly and to state plainly what pertains to the life and constancy of a believer in order that he may profit thereby. It is another and a very different thing to make such a statement equivalent to a doubt cast upon the final safety of that believer himself.

In a subsequent part of this chapter, our Lord seems still to keep the imagery with which it opens before the disciples, and his language is very emphatic and significant. "Ye have not chosen me," he says. You have not chosen me from any impulsive or capricious feeling of your own, or because I was in the way and you did as others; this would be the work of fruitless branches; *but I have chosen you.* I have selected you, and have "ordained you," or *placed* you, that is, as branches in the vine—this is my doing, not yours, and I have done it for this express purpose, (and when I work, who can hinder it?) "that ye should go, and bring forth fruit, *and that your fruit should remain.*" And these words obviously imply the same as those used by Christ on another occasion—"Every plant that my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted out."

These things, then, seem manifest. "No man can come to Christ, except the Father, which hath sent Christ, draw him," *i. e.*,

by his Holy Spirit. "Thine they were," says Christ, "and thou gavest them me." "And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." Again, "I have chosen you, and set you, or placed you," so firmly, by my Spirit working in you, that ye shall abide in me, and "go and bring forth fruit, and your fruit shall remain." That there are branches of whom all this can not be said, and by reason of their barrenness are at length cut down, dried up, and withered, is a sad truth. That all this springs from their own unwillingness to abide in Christ is true also. That they may for a long time appear very much as the other branches, is not less true; but their final separation, arising out of their original and continued separation in heart from Christ, is what the words of our Lord mark, *not* the possible falling away of the truly righteous; and in this respect they are exactly similar in import to the words of the Evangelist: "They went out from us, *but they were not of us;* for if they had been of us, *they would have continued with us:* but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were *not all of us.*"*

Once more, we must observe the reference to the husbandman of this True Vine. "*My Father*" is the husbandman. Now, if to those who reject Christ—"who trample under foot the Son of God," and "put him to an open shame," by "crucifying him afresh"—this announcement is calculated to inspire them with terror, seeing that they shall fall not only "into the hands of the living God," as "a consuming fire," but into the hands of a Father, whose only, whose well-beloved Son has been so treated by them;—on the other hand, how full of sweet and precious consolation it is to the people of God, "to those who have received" the Son of the Father, "who have believed that he came forth from God," and who have honored him, and will honor him and serve him for his own sake forever—that it is the Father of this best friend of theirs that is mentioned as the husbandman who will take care of them and all concerning them. And specially when the work of the husbandman here referred to is pruning and cutting, intimating the painful and trying processes through which the children of the kingdom must pass to their everlasting haven—how precious to be assured that it is a Father's

* John ii. 19.

hand that will guide the pruning-knife, appoint and limit every trial. What a pledge for tenderness and love and mercy in all their tribulations! What continued refreshment was it to Christ himself throughout the whole of his long and bitter sorrows, to have the countenance of his Father, and to know that he was finishing *his* work: and so in their measure and degree it is intended that the people of God should be in this respect as their Master. It was the Father who put the Son to grief, who laid on him the iniquity of us all; and yet Christ ever testified, "Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world;" and "thou lovest me always." So let it be with his disciples. Let every thing the Father sends to us, instead of crushing us, or causing us to faint and be weary by the way, and to hang down our heads as a bulrush, lead us to look up more steadily than ever to himself, and say, as our great High-Priest said before us, "Father, not my will but thine be done."

CHAPTER III.

THE ROCK—THE STRONGER THAN HE—THE PHYSICIAN.

We proceed now to another view of the great Prince of the Kingdom of Light, as presented to us by his own parabolic teaching.

"*Upon this rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell* (Hades) *shall not prevail against it.*"—Matt. xvi. 18.

The similitude here is very simple. There is a builder engaged in his work. He has his materials, and with them he constructs his building according to his plan, and it rises under his hand from the foundation to the top-stone, resting on the solid rock beneath. It is not simply a building fitly framed together in itself that is meant, but strong and enduring, and capable of resisting the fury of the elements, and the assault of the deadliest foe, because it is founded on a rock.

It is one of the most remarkable instances of the tenacity with which the mind of man clings to a wrong interpretation of the Word of God, when such interpretation has once become current—that this very simple image, so clear and so obvious in its bearing, should have continued till now to be turned from its right and lawful meaning to that which impairs alike its beauty and its force. The servant has been made so prominent in the interpretation that the glory of the Lord and Master has been well-nigh lost sight of altogether.

Of course, reference is not now made to the Romish view of this passage, by which it is declared that not only is Peter *the Rock*, but that this proves both *his* primacy over the other Apostles, and likewise the primacy of *all* his so-called successors in the see of Rome over the whole visible Church of Christ on earth.

It is not worth while to waste words in refuting such an utterly groundless inference as this from the language before us, even if we granted that Peter is "*the Rock*." Archbishop Whately's view of this Romish *deduction* is, no doubt, the common sense one—that the Romanists never gained their idea of either Peter's primacy, or that of the Popes of Rome, from this passage; but, having resolved that Peter and the Popes should have the primacy, it was found convenient to press this passage, if possible, into the support of that which had already been received. It is not, then, to this utterly untenable inference from this passage, even supposing Peter to be "*the Rock*," that allusion is now made, but to the interpretation itself, which yields this designation to him at all. It is against this that a formal protest ought to be entered and steadily maintained, because, though we may avoid taking along with this interpretation the wild follies ingrafted on it by the Romish Church, we nevertheless lose by it a very precious view of the Lord Jesus himself.

It is very singular that a large number of Protestant commentators should, from the part which Peter took in the conversation in which our Lord introduced this similitude—from the fact of our Lord expressly naming him, though not for the *first* time, a stone, and likewise from the fact of the same Apostle taking a prominent part in the apostolic mission on the day of Pentecost—it is not a little singular that merely on this narrow ground they are content to give to a man, a mere man, even an Apostle of Jesus Christ, an epithet, which throughout *the whole* of the rest of Scripture, both in the Old and New Testaments, is, by the admission of all, *exclusively given to God*. The figure occurs again and again in the Old Testament, and invariably is meant to represent Jehovah. Pages might be written in proof of this, but it is unnecessary. And specially it may be remarked, that the figure frequently occurs in those Psalms which are distinctly prophetical of the Messiah, and therefore the very epithet which throughout other portions always belongs to God, is at the same time applied to Christ. Then in the New Testament the testimony is equally explicit. "The Rock of offense," which is laid in Zion, is Christ. "That Rock was Christ," says Paul, in 1 Cor. x. 4. Surely with all this evidence in favor of the invariable use of this epithet in Scripture, if in any one passage the

figure which is thus always applied to Jehovah and Jehovah-Jesus be given to a mere man, the meaning of that passage should be so distinct and plain as at once to silence all disputing.

It is also not a little remarkable how a writer, who, from the force of habit, or from regarding too exclusively one feature in the language of our Lord, concludes that Peter is "*the Rock*" here—does, nevertheless, in another parable given both by Matthew and Luke, where the interpretation has never been made so much the subject of dispute, suggest what surely is the true meaning of the term. In the parable of the wise and foolish builders, Alford says, "This similitude must not be pressed to an allegorical or symbolical meaning in its details, *e. g.*, so that the rain, floods, and winds should mean three distinct kinds of temptation; but THE ROCK *as signifying* HIM *who spake thus, is of too frequent use in Scripture for us to overlook it here.*" Strange it is, that when this writer so truly expounds the Rock as Christ, in the one figure, giving strength and security to the building, he should substitute for him in the other a mere servant, though an Apostle, giving strength and security, not to this or that *individual* builder, but to the *whole Church* of the living God.

But in truth, any interpretation otherwise than that which makes Christ "*the Rock*," will not stand examination. A fallacy lurks in the other which applies it to Peter, that needs only to be fairly looked at, in order to prove how untenable it is. Let the following stand as a fair specimen of this latter interpretation. "The name *πέτρος*, (not now given, but prophetically bestowed by our Lord on his first interview with Simon, John i. 43,) or *κηφας*, signifying a rock, the termination being only altered to suit the masculine appellation (?), denotes the *personal position of this Apostle in the building of the Church of Christ.* He was the first of those foundation-stones (Eph. ii. 20; Rev. xxi. 14) on which the living temple of God was built: this building itself beginning on the day of Pentecost, by the laying of *three thousand living stones* on this very foundation. That this is the simple and only interpretation of the words of our Lord, the whole usage of the New Testament shows: in which not doctrines, nor confessions, but *men*, are uniformly the pillars and stones of the spiritual building.*

* Alford, *in loco.*

This last statement is admirable, and strictly just. And it is not to be doubted, that if those Protestant writers who deny that the Rock means Peter here, had been more careful in bearing this in mind, instead of affirming that it is the *doctrine* which Peter expressed, or the *confession* which he made which is meant, there would have been less plausibility in the argument used in opposition to their view. But, in truth, the question does not lie in the mere critical examination of the passage between Peter as the Rock, and Peter's *confession* as the Rock. "The usage of the New Testament" is assuredly against the latter. The question in reality lies between Peter as the Rock, and *Christ whom Peter confessed.* This altogether relieves us from the difficulty referred to in the above extract. It is not Peter's confession, but *He* whom Peter confessed, that is "*the Rock*"—not a doctrine, but a living being. A single glance at the context will bring this plainly out. "Whom do men say that I am?" Peter replied, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, replied Christ, for flesh and blood hath not revealed, (*it*, not in original,) but my Father which is in Heaven." The writer of the above extract very justly draws attention to the *revealing* here spoken of, as parallel to that alluded to by Paul in the Epistle to the Galatians. A comparison of the two does indeed yield most satisfactory results. Paul says, "when it pleased God . . . *to reveal* HIS SON *in me.*" And then he adds, "He conferred not with *flesh and blood*," because the latter had nothing to do with this revealing. Here, then, we have the exact parallel to our Lord's words before us: *First*, "Flesh and blood" being of *no* avail;—*then*, "God," or "my Father which is in heaven," the efficient cause of revealing;—*and* "HIS SON," that which was revealed both to Paul and Peter. And so the words of our Lord may be paraphrased thus: "Thou hast said that I, the Son of Man, am also the Son of the living God. Blessed art thou, for flesh and blood hath not revealed *him*, or *me*, unto thee, but my Father in heaven." And then when he adds, "And I say unto thee, Thou art Peter, and on this Rock will I build my Church," it is not the confession that the Apostle made, but Jesus Christ the Son of the living God, who had been "*revealed in him,*" even as Paul, which is this glorious, strong, and everlasting Rock of Ages.

But further, notice how this application of the epithet, "the Rock" to Peter, involves the fallacy to which reference has been made above. The language of the extract just given, brings out this forcibly. The name, it is said, "denotes the *personal position of this Apostle in the building of the Church of Christ.* He was the first of these *foundation-stones* on which the living temple of God was built." But surely there is the widest possible distinction between a "*foundation-stone*" and "the Rock," on which the whole building, from foundation to top-stone *rests!* If Peter is a *foundation-stone*, then he only rests *upon* the Rock, he is not the Rock itself. Then it is doubtless true that the appellation, Peter or Cephas, "denotes *the personal position of this Apostle* IN THE BUILDING;" but this very admission is destructive of the statement that he is the Rock on which the *whole building* is erected. He is indeed the "living stone," and honored to be a "foundation-stone," and he is probably addressed as Peter or Cephas, in allusion to this very fact, but having thus his "personal position in the building," he is altogether precluded from being "*the Rock*" on which both he and others equally are built. The fallacy lies in making the words rock and foundation-stone convertible terms, when there is nothing in the passage to warrant this. The word foundation-stone is not used, nor adverted to in the passage. When a builder is engaged in his work, he needs materials, which he may arrange upon the rock which lies beneath; and so when our Lord refers to himself as the Rock, on which a building glorious and secure is eventually to rise, he necessarily refers to the material he uses in his building, and Peter, his faithful follower, is ready at hand to supply the type of the "living stones" in this temple.

But there is still another formidable objection to such an interpretation as is quoted above. While it keeps prominently in view the *building*, it keeps at the same time altogether out of view what is equally prominent and important in the figure, the *safety* of the building. "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Why? Because it is "founded on a rock." It is so strong as to defy all the power that can be brought to bear against it. Now, if we admit for a moment that Peter is "*the rock*," because "he was the first of these foundation-stones," the honored position which he was privileged to hold there can never in any way be

justly regarded as the ground of the Church's safety! Granted that on Peter "the Jewish portion of the Church was built," was this its security? was it in consequence of this that "the gates of hell" should never prevail against it? Impossible. (Appendix C.)

We conclude, then, that it is not Peter, but Peter's Master—not Cephas, but Christ, who is here set forth as "*the Rock*"—Christ not doctrinally, not in confessions of faith, not in systems of mere notional religion, but Christ *personally*, "the Son of the living God." Let us then see how gloriously the figure before us adds to the testimony we have already gathered from the Gospels regarding this Being.

We have seen the love of Christ united with his righteousness, inasmuch as he is "the door" by which his people enter in and are saved, not by doing violence to the justice of God, but by submitting to it. We have seen his love united with his wisdom, in that he is "the good Shepherd," loving his flock so much as to "lay down his life" for them, and dealing with them so wisely in leading them "in and out," and providing pasture for them. And we have seen his love united with his humiliation, in that as the vine and the branches are one, he has so loved man as to humble himself to take man's nature on him, that he may, in virtue of his own merits, supply the inner life with all its fruitfulness to such as believe in him. And now, here, in the figure before us, we have Christ's love united with his power, in that as he has so loved his Church as to build it upon himself, it may be immovable in his strength and power forever.

And just as in the vine and branches there is, as we have seen, *implied* that on which the vine is trained, and equally in the thing illustrated, there is *implied* the Godhead to which the manhood of Christ clung;—so here the Godhead is expressly set forth, and the manhood left to be implied. And this is just what we might expect from the question whence the conversation arose between our Lord Peter. "Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am?" No question as to his manhood—*that* is taken for granted. Peter's reply introduces the subject of our Lord's rejoinder under the figure before us. "The Son of the living God." An expression admitted by all the best commentators as necessarily meaning the essential godhead of Christ.

And how admirably suited is the figure for this purpose: "*This Rock.*" Look at it in the light of Scripture, whether of the Old or New Testament, and it raises the mind at once to the great and glorious Jehovah—He who is from everlasting to everlasting, God over all, blessed forever and ever. Let the reader carefully select all the passages in Scripture in which this image is used. Let him arrange all these under his eye, and then he will be prepared in some measure to enter into the force of the language which our Lord used on this occasion. Or look at it merely as a natural object—a rock How apt is the figure! Its strength. Its durability. "The *everlasting* hills," as Scripture has it. There is nothing in the material world which can afford so striking an illustration of the everlasting power and strength of Jehovah. When a house is built on a rock, the builder prepares his materials and builds thereon, but he has not built the rock. He has found it ready for his building—so when the great Master-builder would build up his glorious Church, while he has his materials to prepare in order to commence and complete his building, he finds the rock prepared for his undertaking, "even his own eternal power and Godhead."

And again, just as in the vine and the branches, we have, as we have seen, Christ and his visible church set forth, so here in the rock and the building on it, we have Christ and his true Church—his chosen and faithful ones set forth. And here, also, we must take special note of the admirable adaptation of the imagery. In the vine and the branches, it is the human nature which is prominent. It is this which alone forms the general identity between the stem and *all* the branches, whether barren or fruitful; and so we are not surprised when this is the sole connection common to *all*, to find some, *i. e.*, the unfruitful branches, broken off. In the Rock and the building, on the other hand, it is the Godhead which is prominent; and so, when we hear of a building raised on *that*—a building, each stone of which has thus, in a mysterious manner, become identified as it were with it—we instinctively feel that the building is to remain perfect and intact. Not a stone placed there at first which has not been shaped, prepared and polished, and fitted into its right position; and not a stone, when once there, ever again removed. And surely it is in this figure that we have the strict analogy to that frequently used

in the Epistles, "The body and its members." The mystical body of Christ in the latter is just the Rock and the building here. There is the same general idea of mutual dependence pervading both: and there is especially common to both, the absolute necessity— if the one or the other are to be perfected—that nothing *once* in either of them shall ever be removed. A member cut off from the body, mutilates the body and disfigures it. A stone taken out from a building impairs its strength, and destroys its beauty.

And let us trace out the figure a little further. We have said, that the humanity of Christ is taken for granted. "Whom do men say that I, *the Son of Man*, am?" Where, then, does this manhood find its position here in connection with "the Rock," and "the building" on it? A brief parable, which our Lord adopts from the Old Testament, will suggest the answer to this question, and therefore it will be well to consider it here, though not at any length, as the *main* purport of it falls in elsewhere.

"*Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the Scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is made the Head of the corner?*"—Matt. xxi. 42.

We shall, in taking up this passage, more fully afterward show, that the Lord Jesus Christ is *the stone* here spoken of;—not "*the Rock*" now, but a *stone*. A stone offered to the builders, and rejected by them, and yet at length becoming the Head of the corner, or the chief corner-stone in the foundation, on which the whole building rests. And this, then, supplies to us what is left to be *inferred* in the figure of "the rock and the building." Christ, as the Son of God, is the rock—immovable and everlasting, and bearing the whole weight of the building that is raised upon it. Christ, again, as the Son of Man, is a stone—"a tried stone"—a "precious stone"—"the chief corner-stone" built, not *by man*, on the rock, but by his heavenly Father; for "this is the *Lord's* doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes." And thus we have him set forth, as is frequently done by the Apostle Paul. Speaking of the true Church of the living God, he says, "Ye are built upon the foundation of apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone." And again, "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Christ Jesus."

With what exquisite fitness, then, does the whole figure come

forth from this examination! Christ is the Rock. As such he abideth ever. Not moved from one place to another. No changeableness. Not built *in*, but built *upon*. Again he is himself *one* of the stones in the building laid on this rock. His human nature was prepared, and began to exist in time. He was set in, and appointed to, his right place in the great spiritual temple, which is his body, the church. He is himself, as Peter says, "a living stone." And thus he and his people are brought near to each other. He and they are *one* building, just as the head and the members are *one* body. And yet, as Christ is the *Head* and we the members, in the latter figure, so among the living stones of the former, He is "the chief among ten thousand," and the "altogether lovely."

And so against this united strength, this rock of the Godhead, and this manhood of Christ with all those made alive again in him, resting forever on that Godhead, "the gates of hell shall not prevail." The gates of *Hades*. The ordinary idea attached to this, that the powers of darkness are here meant, is only remotely involved in the other and primary one. It is as if our Lord had said, "My church built upon me, depending on me, united to me, raised by myself, can never be moved or destroyed —no weapon formed against her can prosper. True, this will not yet for a while appear. First, as regards myself, I shall go down to the grave. Hades will appear to prevail over me. Then, one after another of the living stones in my temple shall pass away—dust returning to dust, and the spirit to God who gave it; but this apparent triumph of death is but for a moment. '*I* am the resurrection and the life,' and 'he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.' Yet it shall be seen that I will put all things under my feet; and my crowning promise to my church is, that by her union with me, and resting on the rock, she shall at length be the conqueror, and 'death and Hades shall be cast into the lake which burneth with fire.'" And thus it is that Christ "loves his people unto the end." And herein is his power seen likewise in "saving with an everlasting salvation."

It may not be out of place here to draw attention to an illustration given us of Christ in a parable already considered, the peculiar feature in which was then purposely omitted, inasmuch

as it finds room more suitably now. In the figure we have just had under review, the love united with the everlasting power and strength of Jehovah-Jesus is brought before us. And yet it is power and strength mostly under a passive aspect. The rock and the stone are each of them severally and unitedly the emblems of strength and durability. When once the stones are placed in the building on the tried foundation, and on the rock, then they are secure in the strength of that on which they rest. We also notice in the words of our Lord, who it is that places these stones in the right place. "On this rock will *I* build my church." He who is the everlasting strength of his church—"the rock of ages"—who is also one with them in the building as the chief corner-stone—is also the great and wise Master-builder who has planned and devised the beauteous structure, and who will never cease his labor until its glorious pinnacles shall rise amid the cloudless sunshine of the eternal world, and the last ornament be placed on the summit, amid the shoutings of the countless throng, crying, "Grace, grace unto it."

But then, besides all this, there is the material for this glorious church implied. The builder may have his rock, and his chief corner-stone, and have all his plans perfect and complete, but whence does he obtain his materials? This implies a different process from what is directly conveyed to us in the imagery before us. He must go to the quarry. He must select there what is most suitable for his purpose. He must hew this out of the surrounding mass. He must shape, and form, and polish it, and he must convey it to the building on which he is working, and there fix it in the proper place. Even so with the thing illustrated. When Christ says, "*On this rock will I build my church,*" there is implied the previous process of going after, discovering, separating, preparing, and bringing to himself all the material of which the church is composed. The same Apostle whose answer led to this declaration, significantly calls this material "*lively stones.*" When, therefore, the spiritual mind observes Christ's glorious church rising—when he sees "the Lord daily adding to his church such as shall be saved," and recognizes all these saved ones as "fitly framed together, and growing into a holy temple, in the Lord, an habitation of God through the Spirit," then he knows that before one of these stones could have found its position there,

there must have been a work of preparation; for each was at one time but a part of a shapeless mass of stone, or, to dismiss the figure, "dead in trespasses and sins," under the dominion of "the prince of the power of the air," and "without God" in the world.

How, then, did these dead become alive again, so as to be united in one blessed bond forever with God, and bear his glory? How did these worthless stones become "lively stones?" This great change has been effected by the Spirit of God, as the immediate agent in the matter. He has discovered them, separated them from the evil mass, made them new creatures, and so fitted them to take their place in the family, and among the chosen ones of God. When the Spirit's work comes specially to be considered, we shall endeavor to unfold all this fully. Meanwhile, let it be noticed that he does this as the great agent of the Head of the church—even Christ. "*He* (that is *Christ*) shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." And thus we observe, that while it is the Spirit who is immediately operating on the sinner's heart, changing, and renewing, and fitting it for the living temple, he does all this under Christ. And so, as the great Builder of his church, we must not only regard him as laying each stone successively in that glorious structure, and securing all upon the rock, but it is he also who has prepared these stones and made them what they are, fit for this habitation.

And here, then, besides his love in selecting, and renewing, and cleansing by his Spirit, there comes forth the manifestation of his power and strength, not now in its passive aspect, but in full active operation. The poor sinners whom he has taken out of the pit, and hewn out of the rock, on whom he has set his love, were not only spiritually dead before his Spirit breathed into them the breath of life, but they were strongholds of Satan. Each of them was a fortress and a palace of the wicked one. "The strong man," who "trusted in his armor," "kept his palace," and held "his goods in peace." Each one of them was in the possession of the great and powerful adversary of God and man. When, therefore, they are to be brought to the spiritual temple, and made meet to be partakers in the inheritance of the saints in light, there must be something more than outward or even inner changes in them. It is not enough, if they are to *join* the "general assembly and church of the first-born written in

Heaven," that they be even "swept or garnished," the "strong man" must be *bound* so as no longer to reign within them as *his* palace, and hold all there as his own; and who does this? "*The stronger than he* cometh upon him, overcomes him, taketh from him all his armor wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils,"

Thus Christ's power and strength are revealed against this terrible foe. He binds Satan in each heart, and destroys his dominion there, and this process shall never cease, as long as he has "lively stones" to place in his temple; and when that temple is completed, then will he finally bind this evil one in chains of darkness, and cast him forever into the lake of fire. Every "lively stone," then, as it is placed in the building of God, is not only an evidence of the power which sustains and keeps it there, but it is in itself an evidence of the power which delivered it out of the tremendous grasp of the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience; and then we must not omit to notice, that the binding of the strong man in the palace he had called his own, and the spoiling of his goods, implies, further, that it has changed owners. "*The stronger than he*" has "divided the spoil," and dwells there now—the rightful, the lawful possessor, the King upon his throne, the supreme director and controller of all within, so that when the believer is placed in the temple, he is not merely fixed on the "rock of ages," made one with the "tried foundation"—in other words, resting *on* Christ, and united *to* Christ forever; but Christ is also *in* him, the giver of his life, the conqueror of his mighty foe, the Lord and King of his heart, and the "hope of his glory." Reader, if you can hope that you are among the "lively stones" of the spiritual house, how precious ought David's prayer to be in your estimation! how constantly ought you to make it your own! "Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength (*rock,* Heb.) and my *Redeemer.*"

A single glance may well be taken here at this great Prince of the kingdom of light in another feature still from any that precede. We have seen his love and his righteousness, his love and his wisdom, his love and his humiliation, and his love and his strength, presented in their union before us, by the several figures we have examined. One other still remains, to which allusion has been already slightly made, and which must now be briefly

noticed. "*They that be whole need not* A PHYSICIAN, *but they that are sick.*"

Christ's love and his *skill* are set forth in these words as united for the good of his people. When he visited this world, he found not righteous but sinners in it. It was, indeed, because of this that he came. He found what he expected, and his purpose in coming was to save the sinner, or, in the figurative language before us, to heal those sick with the disease of sin. Now, if a physician is to be of any service to one laboring under severe bodily disease, he must first exercise his skill in the discovery of the disease. A mistake here may be fatal; while aiming at the patient's health, if he is at fault in his *diagnosis*, he may add another malady to the sickness already existing, and at once destroy all hope of the recovery of the sufferer. Then, when the disease is discovered, the next exercise of his skill must be in the determining on the proper remedy. Here, also, an error may be as fatal as in the previous stage; and beside this, when he has discovered the disease and laid his hand upon the remedy, his skill is further to be taxed and tested by the application of the remedy, not giving it to one patient just as he gives it to another, but suiting it to the constitution and habits of each, and then carefully watching every turn in the progress toward health and cure, skillfully taking advantage of every symptom of improvement, and warding off any adverse influences which might check, impede, or impair the remedy he is applying.

Now, in all these things the physician of the body, however zealous, careful, and anxious he is, may after all lack the skill which will eventually be the means of recovery to the patient. But Christ, the great Physician of the soul, has not only skill, but unfailing skill, with which to deal with the poor soul troubled and dying under the malady of sin. He sees at a glance every symptom of the disease, and understands it all, as the Searcher of the heart that is diseased. "All things are naked and open to him with whom we have to do." "He knows what is in man." He can not be mistaken in the nature of the disease, nor can his skill ever be at fault as to its character, its cure, or, if left unchecked, its end. He also knows the remedy—his skill has devised that also—a remedy which can not fail—a sure and sovereign cure for the mortal disease of the sin-sick soul. Every

thing connected with its power of healing is as clearly seen by this skillful Physician as the disease which is to be cured. Then his skill never fails him in the application of this remedy. In one case he exhibits it in one way, or under one form; to another, in another; but in each and every one he is infallibly successful; the remedy in his hand is omnipotent in all. Then his skill never wavers in the process of curing, be that lengthened out or quickly over. Every moment of the recovering soul is not merely carefully watched, but skillfully provided for. He protects it from evil influences; he gently stimulates it when it is progressing well, or uses more powerful means, bitter things, of which he well knows the efficacy, if the progress be slow and dull.

And then, in addition to all this, his skill as the Physician of the soul is linked to unutterable love for that soul. The physician of the body may be thoroughly skillful. It may be that he shall never be at fault in the discharge of his duty to the diseased and the suffering, and yet all this may be associated with indifference, coldness, or apathy. He may take pleasure in his work for its own sake, and be proud of his scientific achievements in the arresting of disease and the promotion of health, but he may never throw away a kindly thought on the patient, or make him feel that the skill which he is exhibiting is stimulated and excited by his friendship and his love. Not so with Christ. This Physician, before he came into contact with the sin-sick soul, had to deny himself. He had to "empty himself of his reputation." He had to leave unutterable glory that he might come and stand by the sick-bed of the poor wretched sufferers of mankind. He willingly and gladly laid all aside in order that he might, with vailed glory, touch the hand of the sinner, and make him feel that a friend and a helper was nigh. And more than this, the remedy which he applies is one that cost *Him* much. It was not to be bought with silver and gold—it was purchased at the expense of his own suffering and death—not one single moment's hope for the poor sinner—not a ray of hope—not a single movement toward recovery—not a single change in the feverish pulses of his diseased life—unless this were done. But this kind and loving Physician faltered not. "I have a baptism, he cried, to be baptized with, *and how am I straightened until it be accomplished.*" And then, even when *this* is done, he does not place the

sufferer in other hands till this cure is perfected, but he himself never leaves him for a moment. "Fear not, for *I* am with thee," is the sweet and thrilling language which he gently utters by the faint and weary soul. All that is sharp and painful he kindly, lovingly mitigates by his gentle sympathizing presence. The terrors of the soul fly before the still small voice of his peace and love. "It is I, be not afraid." All the sadness and the sorrow of heart in the sufferer is hushed by knowing that Christ, his Physician, is "touched with a feeling of his infirmities," and that he consented himself to "*suffer*, being tempted, in order that he might succor them who are tempted." O, reader, commit your soul to this loving Physician—he will heal, he will cleanse it. His skill is unerring, and his love is infinite. "Look unto him," and he will meet you at the beautiful gate of the temple, and give you feet to walk therein, and a tongue unloosed to join in its songs of praise. "Look unto him," and disease and death shall be driven away forever from your soul—weakness and infirmity be known no more; and when they that have gone to other sources of health and cure shall "faint and be weary, and the young men (those who boasted of their strength, and *appeared* to be what they boasted) shall *utterly fail*," then you shall "*renew* your *strength*, you shall *mount* up with wings as eagles; you shall *run* and not be *weary*, you shall *walk* and not *faint*."

CHAPTER IV.

THE BRIDEGROOM—THE OLD AND NEW GARMENT—THE OLD AND NEW WINE.

But we come now to that special view of the Prince of the Kingdom of Light which may well be regarded as the most precious and glorious. We have to look at him now as crowning all his gifts with the brightest and best of them all. He is the "door" of safety, the "good Shepherd," the "true vine," the "rock," the "foundation-stone," the "stronger" than all our enemies, the "physician" of our souls—and, over and above all this, he is "the bridegroom" of his Church—one to whom she is espoused, with whom she is joined in an everlasting covenant, and in whose house and home she is to dwell forever. The forerunner of Christ had, as his ministry was drawing to its close, sweet and lowly thoughts of this truth, and announced it to his followers. *His* ministry was nearly at an end. It was a mere transition one. *He* must begin to decrease before "the mightier than he." He marked the glorious day of the Gospel which was opening, and even at its dawn giving token of its latter-day splendor—and he cried, "He that hath the bride, is the bridegroom, (not I, a mere 'voice in the desert' to 'prepare his way;') but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled." And Jesus himself took occasion to use the same imagery regarding himself, so full of bright anticipation to his Church, when the days of her wilderness pilgrimage shall have closed.

"*Can the children of the bride-chamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast.*"—Matthew ix. 15. "*Can ye make the children of the bride-chamber fast,*" &c.—Luke v. 34, 35.

We must not dwell now upon the circumstances which called forth this parable, nor of the *mourning* and *fasting* spoken of in it. These things will find their suitable position further on. It is simply to Christ as "*the bridegroom*," that our attention at present is to be directed. And here let it be observed, that although God's people, his Church, are here represented by "the children of the bride-chamber," the personal friends of the bridegroom, because what our Lord had immediately in hand required this, they are not the less to be considered as his "*bride*," of whom, when the Baptist used the same imagery, he spake. In fact it is here as in the parable of the *ten virgins*. The five wise virgins represent the Church of the living God under one aspect, waiting for the bridegroom to welcome his approach, and to go in with him as his attendants; and yet we are not to suppose that this excludes the higher view, that the faithful, watching people of God are "the bride" herself. Indeed such variety of figure is absolutely required by the necessities of the case. When the sinner is "married unto Christ" by the very act which makes him "a servant of Christ," we see and recognize the necessity for such variety of imagery.

What a wonderful intimation have we here of what the Prince of the kingdom of light is to his people! "Thy Maker is thy husband, the Lord of hosts is his name." It is not merely now that pardon is vouchsafed to the sinner, deliverance from death to the transgressor, recovery of sight to the spiritually blind, health to the spiritually sick, and everlasting security on the rock of ages—but this poor, sinful, erring, diseased, dying creature is to be raised to "glory, honor, and immortality," by an everlasting union with the king who has redeemed him. This is what Christ has determined to do. This is "the joy which is set before him." This, when finally accomplished, shall satisfy him for the "travail of soul" he has endured. Listen to the testimony of his servant in this matter. "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, that he might *present it to himself* a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."

There is something very remarkable when we trace out this

glorious connection so represented before us under the figure of bridegroom and bride, husband and wife. The Lord Jesus leaves his Father's house, and comes down to seek out, and to save poor guilty, sinful souls. He does a great work for them, and procures their pardon and salvation. He also does a great work *in* them, by renewing, sanctifying, and cleansing them, so making them spiritually meet to be joined with the holy and pure in his kingdom forever. In this inner work in each heart, he so manifests himself to them, in the nearest and closest manner, that the soul loses all fear, and learns to lean on him and confide in him as its best friend. It is "drawn to him by the cords of love, by the bands of a man;" it learns to take sweet counsel with him. As he is "*the beloved*" of the Father, so the soul begins to understand in measure how that word can alone express its earnest longing and love toward him. But while all this is going on secretly in each heart, the world holds on its way, saying, "All things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation"—men taking no note of the inner binding of soul after soul in the great espousal of the Christian covenant, just as we are told regarding the building of Solomon's temple, that there was no sound of ax or hammer heard on the spot;—the stones and the beams were all made ready at a distance, not seen as the great work was going on with each one, which was but preparatory to its being placed in its proper position in the temple. And beside this, the very work of preparation itself secretly going on in each heart is, during the whole of this dispensation, accompanied by that which is dark, threatening, and trying from without. The Church is indeed in the wilderness—her lord and bridegroom, after having finished his work on her behalf, has left her for a season without any visible manifestation of his presence. While each heart is undergoing its wondrous and mysterious process of change, "into the image of Christ, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord,"—all, as regards outward things, seem only passing through tribulation and trial. The people of God have more the aspect of the bereaved widow than the expectant bride; but the time is coming when the voice shall be heard "The bridegroom cometh"—and when that time does come, then shall heaven and earth ring again with the glorious shout of triumph, "Let us *be glad* and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of the

Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." Then shall Christ show outwardly what he is doing and has done inwardly. Then shall he confess those before his Father and the holy angels who have confessed him before men. Then shall he make clearly known to the whole universe, by his own words and work, that the consummation of his work of love for the sinner is nothing short of his "receiving them to himself, that where he is, there they may be also," that "they may behold his glory," and share that glory with him forever. Then shall be brought to pass that saying that is written, "Unto him that overcometh will I give to sit down with me on my throne, even as I have overcome, and am sat down with my Father on his throne."

And let us not pass by the evidence of his love to his people which arises from this consideration of the glory which shall be revealed in them. True, this love stands clearly manifest in the very fact that such glory is in store for them. His must, indeed, be a great and everlasting love, to raise poor sinful creatures, and set them not only among, but above the princes of the people—not only to deliver them from death, but to make them kings and priests unto God. "Herein is love indeed." But it is not to this mark of his love that reference is now made. It is not so much his love in its great and eternal purpose of mercy, as love in its wonderful forbearance and long-suffering. That the great Head of the Church, her heavenly Bridegroom, should continue his love to her, notwithstanding all her waywardness, is indeed wondrous. Alas, what righteous cause do his people give him every day to turn away from them, and to leave them alone forever! What is it that prevents his jealousy burning like fire, but the everlasting, unchangeable, persevering love wherewith he loves even to the end? It is indeed here as in other respects, "His ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts." What human love would stand constant, repeated, and flagrant manifestations of neglect, coldness, and faithlessness on the part of a betrothed one? What man is there in whose heart love would not wither and die, if he were ever met by heartlessness upon her part to whom he is espoused? But it is not so with Christ. He loves always. He wearies not in his love. He makes no change in his purpose. "Many waters can not quench his love." He loves not only "unto the end,"

but through all the progress to that end—through seasons of declension and spiritual decay—through seasons of slowness of heart and little faith; and he calmly and patiently waits till his Church shall "see him as he is," "awake up after his image," and "be like him"—like him in the depth of his love—like him in its unchanging fullness and purity forever.

And this will be the fitting place to consider the two parables which follow that which has just engaged our attention—the parable of the old and new garment, and that of the old and new wine. The real purport and bearing of these parables can not be fully appreciated, unless by examining them in immediate connection with our Lord's statement regarding himself as the Bridegroom. They manifestly spring out of what he had said of himself, as they, in point of fact, immediately follow in his discourse. It has been justly remarked, that "the idea of the *wedding* seems to run through them." Our Lord had just spoken figuratively of himself as the Bridegroom, and made a solemn and important announcement in connection therewith, and then, as if carrying on the same train of thought, and taking up the figure of the marriage-robe, or the wedding-garment, either that with which the bride was arrayed, or which was provided for the guests, and the wine prepared for the entertainment—he makes each of them in succession the groundwork for an important parable. The one not being by any means a mere repetition of the other, but filling up a deeply important view of the great truth he was aiming to inculcate. Let us attend to each in succession.

"*No man putteth a piece of new cloth into an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse.*"—Matt. ix. 16.

"*And he spake also a parable unto them: No man putteth a piece of a new garment upon an old: if otherwise, then both the new maketh a rent, and the piece that was taken out of the new agreeth not with the old.*"—Luke v. 36.

The general idea pervading the figure here is the difference between new and old cloth. The one strong and fresh, the other weak and decaying. "*The new agreeth not with the old.*" There is an incongruity between them. There is not a relative fitness, and every endeavor to bring them together, or to unite them, will not make a strong or becoming garment, but will only tend to

show how different the one is from the other. The original of our version "*that which is put in to fill it up*," is more literally, "*the completeness of it*," *i. e.*, of the new piece—its substance, weight, consistency. This "*takes from the* (*old*) *garment*," which is not so strong, and the "*rent is made worse.*"

Now, it was in consequence of an objection taken by some of the Pharisees against his conduct, and that of his disciples, which led our Lord to deliver the discourse in which this parable occurs. "Why," they asked, "do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?" Our Lord first of all answered these objections by the parable of the bridegroom and the sons of the bride-chamber, intimating that there was a period coming when his disciples should so mourn and weep that, in comparison of it, all the fastings of the Pharisees were as nothing. The time, he said, had not come *then*. As long as he was with them it could not be. When he was taken away it would. And then, according to his general practice, he proceeds to set forth in the parable before us a more enlarged view of the whole question, of which *fasting* was but a small and comparatively insignificant portion.

He gives them to understand that that which he was bringing in was not a mere addition to, or complement of that which had gone by. The whole Jewish dispensation was passing away. The dispensation of the Gospel was at hand. But the latter was not to be thrust into the midst of the former in order to make it last longer, or wear better. The old dispensation was not the more important of the two; and so the new ought not to be used to renovate and help on the old. The garment of law-righteousness was old. The garment of Christ's righteousness was new. The first was waxing feeble, and ready to perish altogether. The latter was not to be pieced into it, in order that it might be preserved. Such an attempted blending of law and gospel, of shadow and substance, of ceremony and reality, of type and antitype, was not to be thought of. The issue of it could be nothing else than most unsatisfactory. The old could not contain or hold the new, by reason of the weakness and unprofitableness thereof. And any attempt to mix up the one and the other for the marriage-robe would be useless and vain.

Let it be noted, that the "agreement" spoken of in the parable as not existing between the new and the old, simply has reference

to any effort to bring them together, to unite them, to save the one from perishing by the help of the other. The old and the new garments may have been originally from the same materials, and in that respect there would be a close agreement between them; and so likewise in the thing illustrated. The agreement which does *not* exist between the old and the new covenants extends only to this, that they must not be blended together, or mixed up with each other, as if to make but *one*. They agree perfectly with each other in this respect, that they are both originally from God. Both originally as from Him are *good*, but utterly incongruous if brought together for the purpose of making a perfect whole out of the two.

The distinction, then, between the old and new dispensations, and the superiority of the latter over the former, are admirably brought out in this parable. They are as distinct as an old garment from a new, for the one "decayeth and waxeth old, and is ready to vanish away," while the other is "well ordered in all things and sure." The Apostle Paul had been deeply taught to perceive this distinction. "What things," he says, "*were* gain to me, (what as a Pharisee of the Pharisees I had prized, and in which as touching the law I was blameless,) those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I might win Christ, and be found in him; not having *mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.*" He had no conception of his robe being a mere patch-work between law and gospel. He shrank with horror from any, even the slightest tendency toward this. He says it is "preaching another gospel." His words are fearfully pregnant with this truth to the erring Church at Galatia. "Christ is become of no effect to you, whosoever of you are justified (or consider yourselves justified) by the law. *Ye are fallen from grace.*" "Stand fast," he pleads anxiously with them, "stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage," for otherwise "*Christ is become of no effect to you.*" He resisted every attempt to keep the old system together by the piecing of the new with it.

There is a rendering of one part of the parable as given by St. Luke which is well worthy of notice, and which is certainly more accurate than that in the present version. "Then both the new maketh a rent," ought more properly to be, "*Then he likewise rendeth the new*, and the piece that," &c. And this suggests important reflections. The parable, as far as given by Matthew, makes known the futility of attempting to renew or preserve what is old and decaying by the adding thereto of what is new. The parable, as given more largely by Luke, teaches us how both new and old are rendered useless by such attempts. The new garment is spoiled by taking a part out of it—it is rent, and made worthless, and, after all, that which is taken out of it to add to the old agreeth not therewith. And so in the thing illustrated. Not only is it impossible by any means to stay the progress of decay in the old dispensation, "which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed until the time of reformation;" but any such effort is fatal to the Gospel dispensation. To make Christ, or any portion of his work, a mere addition to, or a filling up of what is lacking or needs repairing in such things, is indeed to rend his robe, and to make it utterly useless. Assuredly God will not be mocked with impunity by them who would thus mix up the direct personal work of his dear Son with those mere "*figures* of the true" which went before.

The old dispensation is to the new what the shadow is to the sun. The shadow is not a part of the sun, though it is cast by the sun. It shows that there is a sun. It shows the direction in which the sun is, but it is not the sun itself. And his madness and folly who would desire to put out the sun from his place in the heavens, in order that the shadow he casts might be retained or improved, is not so great as the folly and the wickedness of him who would remove the Sun of Righteousness from his sole and supreme possession of the heaven of righteousness, in order to help on, or to preserve the "weak and beggarly elements" of a righteousness which is utterly unattainable by man. Let it never be forgotten that this is the very motto of Christ's kingdom, "Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." The righteousness which really covers sin, and puts away transgression, is a seamless robe, "woven from the top through-

out"—the complete and the entire work from first to last of Christ, and of Christ alone. This is alone the "fine linen, white and clean," with which his people can enter the bridal-chamber, "washed and made white," not in any sense or way otherwise than in type and figure, by the "blood of bulls and goats," but really and truly by the "precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot." "O the blessedness of the man whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered" by this new, this spotless, this perfect garment. O the glory of all those forgiven at last, when they stall stand before the throne of God and of the Lamb, with all their robes washed white in the "blood of sprinkling." Then, indeed, shall they be seen as the bride, over whom the bridegroom shall "rest in his love," perfectly satisfied with her purity and holiness. Truly then she "shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework," and all "her clothing shall be of wrought gold." And as she will be all fair in her bridal array, so shall her inner graces be equally precious—"She shall be all glorious within;" and "she shall enter into the king's palace," and forever "sit together in the heavenlies with Christ."

Turn now to the second parable.

"*Neither do men put new wine into old bottles; else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved.*"—Matt. ix. 17. "*No man also, having drunk old wine, straightway desireth new; for he saith, The old is better.*"—Luke v. 39.

The fact on which this parable is founded, was well known to all the hearers of our Lord. The leathern bottles used in the East, if they were old, and had been used for some time, would be utterly unfit to contain strong new wine. The rapid action and fermentation of the latter would inevitably burst the bottles, and both the one and the other would be lost. If any man wished to preserve his new wine, he must see to its being stored in new bottles, then "*both would be preserved.*"

In this parable the Lord Jesus turns from the wedding-robe to the wine set forth at the marriage-feast. And as the garment supplied him with an admirable figure illustrative of one important truth regarding his gospel kingdom, so the wine supplies

him with another illustration, equally suitable and striking, for another not less important and cognate truth.

In the one parable we have the Gospel covenant set before us with reference to that which is put on the believer; not the old garment repaired by the new, nor the new rent in order to make up the old, but the new by itself, in its completeness. In the parable now before us, we have that Gospel covenant set forth with reference to what the believer receives within him, and the absolute necessity of his being prepared suitably to keep and preserve this gift. In the former, his justification is specially the subject of illustration. In the latter it is specially his sanctification by the Gospel introduced into the inner man of the heart.

And it is very important that these two things be borne in mind. To attempt to make a compromise between the righteousness of the Law and that of Christ—not, it may be, to substitute the one for the other, but to strive after an ill-assorted union of both, is indeed "to frustrate the grace of God;" for if righteousness came by the law," (in any way,) "then Christ is dead in vain." And equally impossible is it for the man who clings to the shadows and forms of the old dispensation, who is moulded inwardly according to "the rudiments of the world"—those "weak and beggarly elements"—to contain the free and energizing spirit of the Gospel. These two things—his state of mind, and the living principle which can alone call forth into active and fervent operation all that is really good, holy, and true—are utterly dissimilar. His convictions are all in favor of formal observance, external rounds of duty, and outward devotion; and thus he has no sympathy with, or affinity to, the "worshiping in spirit and in truth," which the Gospel demands, and without which all religion is but a dead letter. "Admirably does this parable describe the vanity of the attempt to keep the new wine of the Gospel in the old ceremonial man, unrenewed in the spirit of his mind. '*The bottles are burst.*' The new wine is something too living and strong for so weak a moral frame; it shatters the fair outside of ceremonial seeming; and '*the wine is poured out;*' the spirit is lost; the man is neither a blameless Jew nor a faithful Christian; both are spoiled. And then follows the result;

not merely the damaging, but the utter destruction of the vessel, '*the bottles perish.*' "*

The man who would be filled with the true spirit of Gospel light and liberty—who would have within him, as the sanctifying, vivifying power of all his thoughts, and words, and works, a principle not his own, but of sufficient potency to bring "all his thoughts into captivity, into the obedience which is in Christ Jesus"—must himself be a *renewed* man. He must have been born again of the Spirit—made a new creature in Christ Jesus, before he could be capable of appreciating that which he is invited to receive. But when this is the case—when this preparation of the heart has been made—then there is a blessed harmony established between himself and the inner pervading spirit of Gospel life, and light, and liberty. Being "baptized with one Spirit into one body"—made part of Christ's mystical body, and so a new creature in him, he is made "to drink into one Spirit." And instead of finding it to be the "spirit of bondage again to fear," he discovers that, "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty;" and thus he is *preserved* as a vessel meet for the master's use; and those precious gifts and graces of the Spirit given him, are *preserved* in him to the glory of God, and his own eternal joy.

Our Lord adds these words, as we observe in St. Luke—"*No man also, having drunk old wine, straightway desireth new; for he saith, The old is better.*"

Observe, he does not mean by this addition to the similitude to affirm, that "the old" *is* "better." The general opinion among the Jews of that period regarding old and new wine, is merely taken advantage of as a matter of fact; and the force of his words is this—that accustomed as they were to consider old wine superior to new, it would be matter of great surprise if, after partaking of the former, they should at once prefer and desire the latter. And so as regards the matter he was illustrating. He tells them that it was no wonder if, with all their notions regarding their law,—their minds trained and formed under the peculiar discipline and teaching of the old dispensation,—they should manifest no taste or relish for the new and precious truths which he, as the Messiah, was urging on them in the new. It was no won-

* Alford.

der if, in that generation especially, when with the absence of all the idolatrous tendencies of their forefathers, they adhered with a tenacity unexampled in history to the outward rites and observances of their law, while their hearts, nevertheless, were as far from God as that of their fathers—no wonder if, accustomed to the splendid ritual of their venerated and beautiful temple, with all the deep-rooted prejudices in their mind regarding the peculiar excellence thence derived to themselves as the holy nation, the chosen people of Jehovah—with all the time-honored associations of their race—considering themselves as the rightful possessors of the Holy Land—the lineal, and faithful, and distinguished descendants of Abraham, with their succession of prophets and holy men—no wonder if, with all these, they should turn away with disgust and dislike from a system which demanded the removal of their temple, the lapsing of all its gorgeous ceremonial, the opening of the door of grace and peace to the Gentile, and the placing him on an equal footing with his hitherto more favored brother.

And what our Lord says regarding the Jews of that period, is true of the natural mind under similar circumstances at all times. When the heart has been trained up under a system of form and ceremony—when its every notion of religion has been adopted in connection with what is external in rite, and captivating to the senses in outward observance—then it is no matter of surprise, but the reverse, if when the new wine of the Gospel be offered, it is set aside with dislike, and with the decided preference, "*the old is better.*" And so, it needs not only a new man to be able to contain the new principle which the Gospel provides—no weaker vessel than one specially prepared by the Spirit of all grace—but none other than he can *desire* the new wine. Unless a man be born again, he can not *see, know, appreciate* the kingdom of God. He has no taste for it—would rather be without it—likes his old habits of religion best—begs to be allowed to do as those gone before him have done—says that what was good for them, is equally good for him—and that as he has tried what he has got, and is satisfied, he has no wish to try what, by its very dissimilarity with all that he has experienced, gives no promise of pleasure to his taste.

Note well, reader, that the grace which leads the sinner to

Christ, and Christ alone—which enables him to seek the robe of Christ's righteousness to cover him, is absolutely necessary also to change his habits and make him a willing partaker of the life-giving spirit of the Gospel. And when the former is really found, and the poor trembling soul is covered by it, the latter never fails to be added. When Paul, as we have seen, testifies to his giving up all thoughts of "the righteousness of the law," in order that he might cling to the "righteousness of God by faith," he directly adds, "that I might know him and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death." Having put on the new garment, he was able and willing to receive the new wine.

CHAPTER V.

THE SHEPHERD LAYING DOWN HIS LIFE—THE CORN OF WHEAT DYING—THE BRAZEN SERPENT.

THERE remains still another view to be taken of the Prince of the kingdom of light. We have seen his righteousness, wisdom, humility, power, and skill illustrated, and all of these blended with infinite love. We have also seen portrayed his glory as the Bridegroom with the new garment and the new wine for his marriage-feast, and these, too, associated with his everlasting love. Now we must turn not to what he is, but to that which happened to him. We have noticed his love breathing throughout his whole character and life. We must now look at it as it shines forth in his sufferings and death; and he has himself furnished us with most interesting and instructive illustrations of these sufferings and that death. It may be convenient to arrange these under distinct heads. First, the illustration of his death regarded as a voluntary act on his part. This is fully intimated in the parable of the Good Shepherd, which has been already considered. In enforcing this parable, our Lord says, "*I lay down my life for the sheep.*" "*No man taketh it from me; I have power to lay it down, and power to take it up again.*" Nothing can more forcibly show the willingness with which Christ submitted to death than this. It was not laid upon him by the will of another which could not be resisted; it was willingly undertaken by himself. No doubt, in one sense, the death of Christ was according to the will of God; "it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief;" but there is another side on which to behold this "determinate will and foreknowledge of God." It is this, namely, the readiness of the Son of God to take the nature of man upon

him, and so undertake of his own accord to submit *as man* to this will. Hearken to his words as recorded by inspired men—"Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." Freely the Son of God chose to place himself in the body prepared for him, and to undergo every thing there, which, in the counsels of the Divine mind, were decreed as absolutely essential for the great purpose of man's redemption. And it is in the clear understanding of this truth that we are able in some measure to obtain a glimpse at the *merit* of Christ's death. Had the sufferer in the stead of sinful man been a mere creature, made ready and prepared by the Creator for this great work, then he had no choice in the matter. Born into the universe for this great end, he *must* accomplish it as an act of holy obedience. He has no choice but to submit. It is a demand made upon him irrespective of his "*power*" to yield acquiescence or to resist. Created a dependent being with this task assigned to him, it is nothing more than *his duty* to do it. He could acquire no merit by its performance, nor could he yield any profit to God on that account; and the necessary effect produced on those for whom such a work should be done, must be a still further shrinking than ever from God, who could lay on a mere creature such a load of suffering and woe, while pity would be stirred up for the sorrows of one who must submit to bear them, though he deserves them not, and has never had the opportunity of freely undertaking to endure them.

How different is the real state of the case! We behold Christ as man. Every thing that can be required of sinless obedience to the law of God was fully paid by him. He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." This moral obedience, however, acquired no merit for him. It was due from the creature to the Creator. Unless this obedience had been as perfect as it was, what he offered as meritorious could not have satisfied, and yet it was not in itself meritorious. But beside all this, Christ is surrounded with suffering and sorrow, and at last is led forth to die. This was not what belonged to his condition as a holy and sinless being, but what he voluntarily assumed for his own and his Father's purpose. "I and my Father are one," he testifies, and as the Father saw but one way, and that a way of suffering, shame, and death, by which salvation might be brought to the guilty, and the sinner restored to his favor and made meet

to enjoy it; so the Son agrees to travel by that way, to undergo all the terrible toil of that journey, and never stop until he has, by his own offering of himself, once for all, perfected forever them that are sanctified. Herein was the merit of Christ. The will of God demanded an atonement for the sinner. Christ put himself, of his own accord, in such a condition that he might yield obedience to that will, and "THEREFORE, God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name."

And thus, too, we see who alone among the sons of men can be considered a "profitable" servant. If to save "a multitude whom no man can number, of all people, and nations, and languages, and tongues"—to reclaim a lost and guilty world, and make "the wilderness and the solitary place be glad, and the desert rejoice and blossom as the rose"—if to arrest the progress of sin in God's created universe, and say, "hitherto shalt thou come and no farther," casting death and hell forever into the lake of fire—if this be profit, if this be gain for Jehovah, then Christ is the profitable servant who has succeeded in effecting all this. Profit! To stay the ravages of a spiritual pestilence, and smite down a foul usurper forever from his dominion! this is gain indeed; and Christ has brought these to God. Shall God then be indebted to a mere creature for the purity and safety of his kingdom? Shall God have done for him, by one whom he has made, what he can not do by himself? Shall he suffer a creature of his own hands to build up what he himself was unable to prevent from falling into ruins? Impossible! But that He himself should do all this "*in the form* of a *servant*," betokens the exhaustless resources of his wisdom, and enhances the unutterable glory of his love. And this it is which is shadowed forth in the statement of Christ, "*No one taketh it from me; I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.*" He and he alone of all the sons of men, can by right of conquest, by the excellence and merit of his work, stand before the Throne, and demand as a right all the rich blessings involved in the covenant of grace, and yet by that very demand which *must* be granted, establish the throne of the Eternal King, for he was fully justified in thinking "it no robbery to be equal with God."

But we must not omit to notice what seems in the parable of

the good shepherd to call forth this declaration on the part of Christ. Obviously it is the danger to which sheep are exposed by the rapacity of wolves and beasts of the field. The wolf which seeks to devour and to destroy the flock of God is Satan. The description given of him is to the life—"going about seeking whom he may devour." If as a designing, crafty thief climbing up some other way into the fold, his fraud is detected, and his schemes baffled, so in his onslaught as the wolf, he is met by the good Shepherd, who, unlike the hireling, does not flee when he seeth the wolf coming. Thus we have pictured before us the Son of God looking down on the poor, wandering sons of men, with their great adversary the devil ready to make a full end of them; and as he beholds this, he comes down and stands between the destroyer and his helpless victims. He delivers the prey from the teeth of the oppressor, but he does it by "tasting death for every man"—it is "*through death* that he destroys him that had the power of death." He defeats the enemy on his own ground, just as he himself appears to be vanquished—the moment of his death is that in which "life and immortality are brought to light;" and the poor sheep of the flock that had all but perished have not only "life," but "they have it more abundantly."

But we proceed to another view which our Lord gives us of his death.

"*Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.*"—John xii. 24.

In the parable of the good shepherd, Christ is represented as coming between the spoiler and his prey, the destroyer and his victim—as willingly undertaking by his own death to deliver his poor, persecuted flock; and by this voluntary submission to death acquiring merit before his Father. In the short parable before us, we have intimated to us the connection which exists in the counsels of Jehovah between death on behalf of the sinner and that sinner's deliverance. It does not explain to us *why* God should demand the death of the surety before he pardons the sinner; but it conveys to us the *fact* that forgiveness can come in no other way. It makes known to us that in the inscrutable depths of the Divine will, this and this alone is the way by

which God can be "just and yet the justifier" of the sinner. It announces to us that "it *became* him for whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, *to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.*"

Our Lord connects this parable with what he says of the glorifying of his Father, and likewise the glorifying of himself by the death he was about to die. Thus showing that in the counsels of the Eternal it was a settled thing, absolutely necessary for the stability, and honor, and glory of the throne of God, that if his great work was to be finished in redeeming the lost, and bringing many sons and daughters unto righteousness, it could alone be through death. He might have been born into this world taking on him the likeness of sinful flesh, and living a holy life among the vile and the worthless, bringing down in his own person a bright ray of heavenly light among the dwellings of the children of darkness; but if this had been *all*, the divine will had decreed that he should be alone. If it had been *possible* to "save him" from "the hour and the power of darkness," and yet have his work finished, it would have been done. As a perfectly holy being he would, indeed, have delivered himself. Divine justice would have rejoiced in acknowledging his unsullied holiness and perfect obedience; but not one perishing soul would have been recovered from the pit—not one brand plucked from the everlasting burning. Just as the corn of wheat lying in the granary of the husbandman may be perfectly good—may be in every respect sound and matured, "having life in itself"—yet if it remain there, "*it abideth alone*," so it would have been with Jesus. He would never be able to say at last, "Behold I, *and the children whom thou hast given me.*" And the "Divine will which has determined the law of the glorification of the Son of man, has also fixed the law of the springing up of the wheat-corn, and the one in analogy to the other, *i. e.*, both *through death.*" So that, as on the one hand God in his providence has been graciously pleased to ordain that a corn of wheat if cast into the ground shall first die, and then spring up and "*bear much fruit*," and has thus previously prepared in the kingdom of nature that which shall remarkably illustrate a great truth in the kingdom of grace; so when Christ went down to the grave he died *alone;*—he by himself "endured the grief and despised the shame;"—"of the

people, there was none with him." A solitary being, a spectacle to men and angels, he hung for a brief period on the accursed tree, and then disappeared in the grave. Then it was that his work obtained its full reward. He rose again, like the bright, fresh, green blade which rises from the ground where the corn of wheat lay, telling that death was resolved into life; and when at length the harvest time shall come, he will be found like the corn of wheat which has passed through its stages, first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear, to be no longer "alone," but to have brought forth "much fruit." The people whose sins he bore in his own body on the tree will be gathered into the heavenly garner, as the mighty harvest of the travail of his soul.

And it is interesting to observe what it was which was the immediate cause of our Lord uttering this parable. Certain Greeks, not Hellenistic Jews, but Gentiles, most probably proselytes of the gate, who were in the habit of coming up to Jerusalem to the feast, expressed a strong desire to see Jesus. They confer with Philip, who again speaks to Andrew, and both tell Jesus. Our Lord, when he heard it, immediately declared, "The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified." The coming of the Gentiles to him, introduced to his presence by the instrumentality of Jews, was as it were the very sign of his being now very near that death by which he was to glorify God in bringing both Jew and Gentile into reconciliation with God, and so obtaining that spiritual seed, which was not to be confined to one nation or country on the earth, but was to include in it "all the kindreds of the people," "a multitude whom no man can number" of them all. It has been very strikingly remarked, "These men from the west, at the end of the life of Jesus, set forth the same as the magi from the east at its beginning;—but these came to the *cross* of the King, as those to his cradle."* In the one case and the other, it showed that unto Christ should the gathering of the people be, that he was to be the head among many brethren, that in him all nations should be blessed, and that of "the increase of his government and peace there should be no end;" and as the wise men were met by the tokens of this great one's humiliation—"not having where to lay his head," "despised

* Steir. Reden. Jesu, v. 78.

and rejected of men," "a root out of a dry ground," "without form or comeliness," so these Gentiles were met by the solemn declaration of Jesus, now arrived at the very eve of his sufferings, that the great harvest of souls which he was to gather from all parts of the world, whether Jew or Greek, barbarian, Scythian, bond or free, was only to be obtained by his own submission to death and the grave. And what solemnity is stamped on this announcement of the necessity of his death, in order to bring souls to God and heaven, by a distinct voice being heard from the Father; for even as our Lord was telling "of the hour and power of darkness" through which he was to pass, and yet in the full confidence of his will and purpose, saying, "Father, glorify thy name," "then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again."

But there is still another view of his death which our Lord gives us, and which suggests other considerations connected with that wondrous and mysterious event. His parable to illustrate this, is taken from a well-known part of the history of Israel.

"*And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*"—John iii. 14, 15.

Our Lord alludes to a remarkable event in the history of the people of God, and draws from it a figure by which in the most striking manner to illustrate his own death. The expression, "even so must the Son of man be *lifted up*," can only refer to the peculiar manner in which he suffered death, so aptly represented by the raising of the serpent of brass on a pole. On the occasion of his delivering the parable of the corn of wheat, which we have just been considering, he said, "I, if I be *lifted up*, will draw all men unto me," and the Evangelist immediately adds, "This he said signifying what death he should die." And when at length he was taken by wicked men and was about to be put to death, the same writer draws our attention to the circumstances which led to the peculiar kind of death which he was to endure, "that the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, signifying what death he should die."

But let us look more closely into this incident in Jewish history thus set before us, as faithfully portraying the death of Christ—his being lifted up upon the Cross. And it is important that in

doing so, we shall not be misled by the general fact that the serpent throughout Scripture is taken to symbolize the great enemy of the souls of men. It by no means follows from this, that in the event before us, the poisonous serpents, or the brazen serpent, were meant to represent this evil one. That they do or do not, depends on the connection in which they are found, just as "*leaven*," which is throughout Scripture used to denote an evil and corrupting principle, nevertheless means the very reverse in the parable where the "kingdom of heaven" is likened unto it.

Now it seems to be impossible to regard the serpents which bit the children of Israel in the wilderness, so that many thousands of them died, as emblematic of Satan. Had these serpents bitten the people, and the effect produced on the latter been a rushing headlong into sin, and had there followed hard on this a widespread pestilence and death, then there would be something plausible in this view. But the history is very different. The people had wickedly murmured against God. Their old rebellious spirit had afresh broken forth, and they provoked the holy One of Israel to anger. "They spake against God and against Moses. Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt, to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread." Their iniquity was then at its full. It was already crying to God for vengeance, and so he sent serpents among them, which bit them, and much people died. Surely then, we must regard these serpents as the instruments of God's righteous anger and judgment on those already ripe for judgment by their sins. They were not permitted by God to prove and try his people, but they were sent to *punish* them.

Unless this is clearly borne in view, we shall be involved in inextricable difficulty in the examination of this event. For if when Moses was required to lift up a brazen serpent on a pole, and to require the children of Israel to look at it that they might be healed from the poisonous bites of the serpents, we are to see in this a figure of our Lord Jesus Christ lifted up on the Cross—then how *can* this be reconciled with the view that the serpents themselves were emblematic of Satan. The most ingenious defense of such an interpretation has been recently set forth in the following terms:—"'The serpent' is, in Scripture symbolism, *the devil*, from the historical temptation in Genesis iii. downward.

But *why* is the devil set forth by the serpent? How does the bite of the serpent operate? It *pervades with its poison the frame of its victim:* that frame *becomes poisoned*, and *death ensues.* So sin, *the poison of the devil*, being instilled into our nature, that nature has become a *poisoned nature*, a *flesh of sin.* Now the brazen serpent was made *in the likeness of the serpents* which had bitten them. *It represented to them the power* which had gone through their frames, and it was hung up there, on the banner-staff, as a trophy to shew them that *for the poison there was healing:*—that the plague had been overcome. *In it* there was no poison, only *the likeness* of it. Now was not the Lord Jesus made '*in the likeness of sinful flesh?*' Was not he made sin for us, who knew no sin? Did not he, on his cross, make an open shame of, and triumph over the enemy, so that it was *as if the enemy himself had been nailed to that cross?* Were not sin and death and Satan crucified when *he was crucified?*

The suitableness of setting Satan before us under the figure or emblem of a serpent, is laid down clearly and admirably in the above extract. But as soon as the writer attempts to apply it to the case in hand, he can not prevent a fallacy from creeping into his interpretation. In truth, he loses the distinction between that which bites, and that which is bitten. If Moses had been commanded to make a brazen representation of one of the people suffering agony under the bite of the serpents, then the above statements would be correct. The brazen figure would be *in the likeness* of that which was bitten. "In *it*, there would be *no poison*, only *the likeness of it.*" And so it might be truly added, that our Lord was "made in the likeness *of sinful flesh.*" But surely there is a vast difference between being made in the likeness of flesh that *has been made* sinful, and being made in the likeness of that which *has made* it sinful. And so there is no ground whatever for the statement which is added, in order to bridge over the difficulty, that when Christ was on the cross, "it was *as if the enemy himself had been nailed to that cross.*" Not so, indeed. It was as if the *sinner* had been nailed to the cross, and so by that suffering and death, the dominion ended forever of "him who has the power of death, that is, the devil." That accursed spirit died by his very effort to destroy Christ. But what then? Can it be said with any propriety that the real death which Christ did never-

theless undergo, was *as if* the enemy had suffered it? This would be in other words saying that he suffered in the stead of this enemy. He suffered in the stead of his people, and the enemy destroyed himself by his very effort to destroy Christ, a widely different kind of death from the death of the cross. Neither was it "sin and death and Satan" which were crucified, when "Christ was crucified." Paul gives the true view. "*I* (the sinner, not sin) am crucified with Christ." "For if *we* are planted in the likeness of his *death*," &c.

But, on the other hand, let us dismiss from the incident here referred to, the above symbolism, which by no means need be applied to it, and we shall see how significantly it speaks to us of Christ's death. Observe these different points: 1. The brazen serpent was lifted up—the Son of man was lifted up. 2. The one was according to the will of God commanded—the other was by the same will permitted. 3. Every one who looked on the brazen serpent lived—every one who looks unto or believes in Christ shall live. 4. In the one there was the healing of the body—in the other the healing of the soul. 5. In the one case it was the hands of Moses which lifted up the serpent—in the other it was by the hands of men that Christ was lifted up.

Now in looking at this incident, thus set side by side with the death of Christ, and every particular in the one so closely analogous to corresponding features in the other, we see very clearly the importance of giving a widely different interpretation to that quoted above, regarding the meaning of the symbol on which the whole depends. That the "*brazen serpent*" should, on the one hand, represent the evil one under the form of poisonous serpents biting the people, and on the other represent Christ on the cross healing the people, is what can not be entertained. That the eyes of God's people are to be directed to Christ crucified, "as if the enemy were crucified" there, is not for a moment to be thought of. But how harmonious is the whole picture, if we regard the fiery poisonous serpents as the instruments of God's vengeance and righteous indignation inflicting merited punishment on a sinful people, and thus themselves personifying, as it were, the wrath of God against sin. Now when Moses, by the command of God, raised a figure of brass upon the pole, resembling one of these serpents, and when, moreover, he commanded the people to look

on it, in order that they might be healed from the bites of the serpents, what was the impression calculated to be made on their minds by this? When they saw the figure of the poisonous serpents, would they not be instantly and powerfully reminded of the anger of God against their sin? Would they not, as they descried the brazen serpent lifted high on the pole, tremble as they recognized the very image of that which had already dealt destruction in the camp? And yet as they looked at it as it hung motionless and lifeless there, and as they felt within them the deadly poison which had been diffused through their veins being gradually subdued in its fatal power, and life, and strength, and health once more restored to them, would they not equally perceive in that mystical figure that God's anger was, as regards them, *dead*, that he had turned away from the fierceness of it, that he was reconciled to them, and would no longer visit them according to their sin, nor reward them according to their iniquity?

Now apply all this to Christ. The serpents in the wilderness represented the wrath of Jehovah against sin. They were terrible proofs that God can not look on sin but with abhorrence. When Christ came, *this* Jehovah, *this* pure and holy God, himself became manifest in the flesh. And as we have already seen, the very announcement of his presence was couched in terms implying the nearness of one who would enter into judgment, and consume the adversaries: "Now also, the ax is laid unto the root of the trees," "whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor." But just as his earthly mission closes, we find this very Being, who is "to execute judgment because he is the Son of man," "*lifted up*" on the cross! And what then are the two things which meet our steady gaze at this wondrous and amazing event. First, we behold the wrath of God against sin revealed as it never could otherwise be. The impression made on the Israelite by the appearance of the brazen serpent, of the wrath of God against his sin, is as nothing in comparison of what the spiritual eye discovers in the crucifixion and death of the "only-begotten Son of God." This does indeed bring to his mind what God can and will do with the sinner. And again, as he looks unto Jesus thus crucified, and finds spiritual health given to him, the poison of sin subdued within him, and the vigor and strength of renewed life vouchsafed, then he perceives how the wrath of

God is, as it were, *dead*, in regard to him. He sees in the death of Christ, that God has now nothing to say against him. Through that dark and lowering storm there breaks forth a bright ray of love and peace for him—the thunder and lightning of God's anger have all been spent on that lifeless form, and can be heard and felt no more by those who look, believe, and live.

And here we have likewise the simple connection which binds together Christ and his people, so that God turns away from his anger against them forever. Just as the Israelite *looked* at the brazen serpent, and *lived*, so the sinner has but to *look unto* Jesus—to believe in him, that he may live forever. It was not truly his mere looking that healed the Israelite, nor is it the mere faith, the instrumental cause, which saves the sinner. It was the power of God in the one case, it is the power of God in the other. But just as God chose to give bodily health only to those who looked, so he has chosen to give spiritual health only to those who believe. He is the source of health and life in both, and the certainty of the gift rests on the everlasting security of his promise.

And once more, let it be noted that it was by the hands of a man that the brazen serpent was lifted up in the wilderness, and so it was by the hands of men that Christ was lifted up on the Cross. The sin of the people was the ultimate cause, the hands of the people the proximate cause in both. And thus as we have seen that Christ by his death delivered his sheep from the wolf—and likewise by his own determinate will as God, bore "much fruit"—"became the author of eternal salvation to all that believe;" so now we see him in the perfection of his love, dying by the hands of those very beings he came to save; yea, dying for them, enemies and ungodly as they were, and breathing forth, as he yielded himself to their fury, the prayer, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." His death was a voluntary one. It was submitted to because God willed it should thus be in bringing souls to himself. It was a shameful and ignominious death, because it was inflicted by men who, as they pierced his soul by their unbelief and sin, pierced his hands and feet with nails, and his brow with a crown of thorns.

CHAPTER VI.

LIVING WATER—LIVING BREAD.

But there still remain two views of the death of Christ, and his great love in thus dying, which are necessary to complete the series of illustrations showing forth the glory of the man Christ Jesus. The first of these is the following:—

"*In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.*"—John vii. 67, 38.

Alford has a very striking supposition regarding that which probably suggested the use of this imagery by our Lord. He alludes to the practice at the feast, of a priest bringing water in a golden vessel from Siloam, followed by a jubilant procession, and pouring it out on the altar, while the Hallel (Ps. cxiii., cxviii.) was sung. He says that some regard this custom as referring to the striking of the rock at Horeb, others to the rain for which they then prayed for the seed of the ensuing year, while others see in it an allusion to Isaiah xii. 3, and the effusion of the Spirit in the days of the Messiah. It is possible that all of these might have been included. This custom, then, was observed during *seven* days of the feast, but was *not* observed on the *eighth*. Now, it was on this, the eighth, the last and great day of the feast, that Jesus stood and cried, "*If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.*" And thus, when the mere ceremonial rite had run its course and passed away, Jesus stood forth and proclaimed himself on the last day of the feast—the great antitype—the perennial spring of that living water, which one and all require.

When Jesus thus cried aloud in the hearing of the people, it

would be hardly possible for them to do otherwise than compare his words with the language of their prophets. Surely the language of David must have recurred to their memory at the time, "With thee is the fountain of life;" or that of Jeremiah, "For my people have committed two evils, they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water."

But whether those who heard Jesus remembered such wondrous things or not, he himself distinctly and emphatically claims them as belonging to him. The figure which he uses is equally simple and beautiful. It is that of a fountain from whence there is ever rising up a constant supply of clear pure water. The expression "living" is purposely ambiguous. When applied solely to the figure, it means fresh, springing, running water—water that sparkles as it flows on, and tempts the thirsty to drink, and refreshes the weary and faint. What then such a fountain with this clear flowing stream is to the weary traveler, so is Jesus to the poor, worn out, parched heart of man. "Ho, every one that thirsteth," is his long-continued invitation. "*If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.*" "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life (this '*living water*,' now in its spiritual sense) freely."

But our Lord is graciously pleased to explain to us by his Evangelist what he meant to set forth by the illustration he was using. "*Let him come unto* ME *and drink*," directs us at once to himself, as the fountain whence this living water flows. It is not here as in the streams of earth, that we may be refreshed by drinking at any part of their course, and be altogether ignorant of the source from whence they sprang. If any one will have the living water here spoken of, he must go to the fountain for it. He must go to Christ himself, if he would obtain it. "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldst have asked of him, and HE *would have given thee living water*." The stream, then, is ever flowing on—full, clear, deep, and refreshing, but Christ alone can give to drink. "As the hart pants after the water-brooks," so he that really desires this living water must be able to say to Christ, "So panteth my soul after thee, O God." "*Let him come unto me and*

drink," says Christ—"When shall I *come* and appear before God?" breaks forth from him who is athirst.

But while the words themselves tell us of Christ as the fountain, the Evangelist further informs us as to this "living water" and its true meaning. "But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified." Here is an express and distinct reference to the death of Christ. He was not yet "glorified." The use made by this Evangelist of this expression makes it certain that he directly and unequivocally referred to the death of Christ. The words of Christ, as given by him in a subsequent chapter, leave no doubt on the subject. "The hour is come when the Son of Man shall be glorified." It was only through the grave and gate of death, that he could pass to his glorious resurrection. It was on the cross that the Son glorified the Father, by submitting to be made a sin-offering for his people. It was on the cross that the Father glorified the Son, by accepting the ransom offered, and making him the first-born among many brethren.

It is, then, from the cross of Christ, that this water of life flows. It is alone in virtue of the death of Christ, that the Holy Spirit is given. These words must not for a moment be supposed to intimate that the Holy Spirit had not been given at all in the former dispensation. This is contrary to the whole tenor of Scripture. We are repeatedly assured of the fact, that the Spirit *was* given to the saints of old. "Holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." He is continually referred to as the agent of inspiration—nor less emphatically as the direct agent working in each heart, or resisted in each heart—as, for example, in the defense of Stephen, when he charges on the conscience of his wicked judges the sin of their wicked and stubborn forefathers —"Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye." Nor yet, again, does it appear to be a satisfactory view of these words to say, that the Spirit had not been given so fully and abundantly as he was about to be poured forth on the day of Pentecost. Doubtless, there was specific reference to this great effusion of the Spirit; but this hardly satisfies the very emphatic language—"The Holy Ghost was not yet given· because that Jesus was not yet glorified."

Surely this statement can only mean that there was something peculiar in the gift of the Spirit which is to distinguish this dispensation from the former, and that this peculiarity in the gift is essentially connected with the death of Christ. Nor does it appear difficult to trace this peculiarity. The Holy Spirit was given (and largely given, as the records of the saints of old, in Hebrews xi., make known) in the former dispensation; but he proceeded alone from God. He came to Abraham, to Moses, or to David, with all the power, and wisdom, and love, of Jehovah, and wrought wondrous things *in* them, and *with* them—moved in them, spake in them, and worked by them; but it was reserved for the new dispensation that he should proceed not merely from God, but from CHRIST. From Christ, not alone considered as God, but from Christ as being in one person both God and MAN.

What is it that the child of God in the kingdom of grace experimentally understands as the work of the Spirit in his heart? Is it not the testimony which he bears to *Christ?* He takes of the things of *Christ* and shows them unto his people. He brings all things to their remembrance, whatsoever *Christ* hath said. He does not speak of himself, but of the *man Christ Jesus.* And thus it is seen how expedient it was for Christ personally to retire within the vail and leave this other Comforter for his people. Had he tarried on earth, the hearts of his people could never have been satisfied otherwise than in his presence. But he retires to heaven, while he proclaims the rich promise, "Lo, *I* am with you, even to the end of the world." His Spirit should be with each and every one of his people, even to the end of time. And the work of that Spirit is, that each heart may feel that Christ himself is at hand, not only all-powerful and loving as God, but all-sympathizing as man. And so the anxious, the tried, the laboring, the doubting, the weak, or the strong, may be able spiritually to hold the closest communion with him—tell him every thing—obtain every thing from him, as if they saw him with the bodily eye, and listened to the very sound of his voice.

This is one of the great secrets revealed to the believer by the manhood of Christ, his "being touched with a feeling for our infirmities," having been "tempted in all things as we are." And it is this precious truth with which the Spirit in this dispensation comes laden—with which he charges himself for the comfort and

edification of the chosen people of God. He makes the manhood with all its thrilling emotions and stirring sympathies present, even as he brings near all the calm, glorious and infinite power, wisdom and love of the Godhead. Now, this could not be till the death of Christ. The virtue of that sacrifice was, indeed, by anticipation made the groundwork of all that passed in the way of covenant between God and man of old; but the *experience* of this death by Christ must run out before the fullness of that experience can be made as a rich heritage and treasure for his people. Christ must taste all sorrows, he must drink of every bitter cup up to the last, even the bitterest in the garden and at Calvary. He must pass through a course of inner struggle and emotion, which could be gained alone in human form, and by mingling with the woe and the misery of man. He must *try* all this practically himself, become acquainted with it, not only as a truth which he saw and understood afar off, but which he felt and received, as a matter of deep inner experience in his human nature. This long course of spiritual training, of learning obedience by the things he suffered, could only be perfected at his death. That completed the life-long instruction through which he voluntarily and lovingly passed, that he might with a heart fully strung to every possible emotion of the human soul, be not only a faithful but a loving High-Priest.

> "In all the griefs that rend the heart,
> The Man of Sorrows bears a part."

And then when Christ says, "*If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink;*" and the Evangelist adds, "This spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive; for the Holy Ghost was not yet given: because that Jesus was not yet glorified"—we are made aware of the presence in the *world*, vailed in *human form*, in the garb of *humiliation*, of one who was nevertheless "the fountain of living waters"—that it was from the temple of his body that such living water was now to come forth as should be for the life and refreshment of all people, and that when he had altogether finished the work given him to do, and gone away again—then this living water should flow out of the "Throne of God *and the Lamb*." Such as this had never been before, except under type and shadow. The Holy Spirit

had never thus been given. *This* fountain had not yet been unsealed and opened. Mighty and vast were the preparations for it from the beginning of the world. Earnestly did even the heavenly hosts look on as the time passed away, and the day drew nigh, in which it was to be opened in the house of David, and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and then, at length, when on the cross, the anointed one of God cried out, "It is finished!"—the waters gushed forth from the smitten rock, and among the first-fruits of the Spirit sent forth anew with new gifts of love in his hand to all people, thousands on the day of Pentecost drank of the living water, and "never thirsted" more.

Christ's death, therefore, has made him the fountain of "living water," not marking so much its original source whence it is derived, that is, *heaven*, as specially and expressly the place where it is opened, where it gushes forth to view, and for the refreshment of the weary and the faint, that is, *on earth*. He died for them when he defeated Satan. He died for them when he satisfied the demands of God. He died for them when he submitted to be crucified by man; and now we see he died for them that what he gives them "might be in them as a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

And surely these considerations present us with the key to some passages in the previous part of this gospel, which have been made the subject of much controversy. In the words before us our Lord does not allow us to doubt as to his meaning, since the inspired comment of his servant John follows immediately. In a previous chapter He had used precisely the same figure when speaking to the woman at the well of Samaria as he did when standing in the temple on the last great day of the feast—"If thou knewest," he said, "the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." No one questions the reference made by our Lord in these words. It is universally admitted. "This spake he of the Spirit." And why, then, may it not be asked, when, in the chapter immediately preceding, the same Evangelist is recording a conversation of deep interest and similar import between the same Jesus and another inquirer, Nicodemus—why is it that, on the latter occasion, the meaning of the same word that is used in the case of the Samar-

itan woman, and in the temple on the great day of the feast, is regarded as substantially different, instead of being identical? Why is it that "water" is taken in a spiritual or figurative sense when occurring in our Lord's words in the temple and at the well of Samaria, but in a literal sense when occurring in his conversation with Nicodemus? Surely it would require such a mode of expression as to leave no possible doubt in our minds if Jesus meant such very distinct significations to be conveyed by the use of the same word on three occasions, very similar to each other, and the records of which lie so near at hand in the Gospel written by the same Evangelist. On the contrary, the words of our Lord clearly point in the same direction in all these cases. Nicodemus did not understand what he meant by the new birth, and our Lord condescended to explain this. He calls it being "born of water and of the Spirit." If this meant literal water, the explanation would only tend to perplex the inquirer the more. But if it was meant spiritually, namely, that the new birth to which he referred was the work of the Spirit, and that his work was to the soul what water is to the body, then our Lord by using the figure did two things: first, he suggested to the mind of Nicodemus, what, as a master of Israel, he ought to have well remembered—the many passages in the prophets where the operations of the Spirit are spoken of under the same figure; and next, he led him at once and completely away from that carnal notion he had expressed—"Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?"

We shall have to recur to this subject, and that fully, when, in the course of our consideration of the parables, the work of the Spirit comes immediately under review. In the meantime, let it be sufficient to state, that in the conversation between our Lord and Nicodemus no reference can be fairly considered as made to the ordinance of Christian baptism. To introduce the outward element in that rite into the conversation, is to perplex and mislead the student, not to guide him. Surely the just and proper view is to regard these words as pointing to one and the same truth, to which Christian baptism also points. These words tell of new birth through the Spirit, given by the great Head of the Church. They direct attention to this great and fundamental doctrine of the Gospel. And equally on the other, does the

sprinkling of water in the name of Father, Son, and Spirit, point to the same truth. One and the same truth is reached, but by different approaches. In the one case by a dogmatic statement, in the other by a significant emblem. There will thus necessarily be a close correspondence between the two, as both give one and the same testimony; but this is a very different thing from endeavoring to identify the two.

But in truth, our Lord's conversation with the woman of Samaria suggests the right explanation of his conversation with Nicodemus. He first of all tells her, "Thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." What she needed was a gift. Something which she had not in her own possession or power, which she herself could not obtain at any price; but which, nevertheless, as it was in the gift of another, the possessor of it was willing to bestow. "If thou knewest," he said, "the *gift of God*." What she required was a gift bestowed by another. And none was able to bestow what she required but God. And Nicodemus lacked the very same gift. When he said, "Rabbi, we *know* that thou art a teacher come from God," he only displayed his own ignorance of the person he addressed. Our Lord immediately replied, "Except a man be born again he can not see the kingdom of God;" as if he had said, "You think you *perceive*, or *know*, that I am sent from God, but you are blind to the reality of my mission as the Messiah, and the Prince of the kingdom, and I tell you that unless you are born again, you *can not* perceive it." You require a gift—something which you can not obtain for yourself—the gift of a new birth—being born afresh, or born from above—a gift which none but God has, and none but God can bestow.

Again, our Lord enlarges on his first statement to the woman of Samaria, "Whosoever shall drink of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever shall drink of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." The water from Jacob's well might allay natural thirst for a brief season, but again and again the woman would require to go thither and draw. "Not so," says our Lord, "with the gift of God, which I am able and willing to bestow. That living water shall be in him who receives the gift a well of water springing

up into everlasting life. Once receive the precious gift, and it lodges itself within you. Your partaking of the water that I shall give becomes then, as it were, a life-long draught. Ever in your own heart there will be welling up its unceasing refreshment, and the pangs of thirst can be known no more." In other words, the gift of God, which he offered to this poor woman, was the indwelling of the Holy Spirit within her, who would then become the unfailing spring and source of every spiritual grace and blessing. She would have this new thing lodged within her heart, and bringing forth such holy and precious things as that heart never could have produced by itself. And so, too, in the case of Nicodemus, when Jesus replied, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit"—what was this but testifying that unless "living water" was bestowed, and "became in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life," he could not "enter into the kingdom of God." This living water becoming a well of water springing up, is one and the same thing as the new birth or creation. What was in the natural heart before? Barrenness and death. Not one spiritual emotion, thought, or desire. It was altogether carnal; and that which was born of the flesh was flesh—all its fruit—every thing which proceeded from it was of this character; but when this seed of new birth is implanted, or this "well" of new birth opened in the soul, then all things become new:—"that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." The new life, the new desires, the new walk of the child of God, is just the welling up of this living water from within him into everlasting life.

Finally, let these points thus be kept in mind. Nicodemus, when he came to Christ, was yet carnally minded. In the low view he took of Christ, he only showed the truth, "that which is born of the flesh is flesh." The woman at the well was equally carnal, for she thought the water of Jacob's well superior to what Christ spoke of, and wondered how he could think himself greater than Jacob who digged it. Both were utterly deficient in spiritual things—both needed the entering into their hearts of that which was not natural to either. Unless some such change took place, they could never *see* the kingdom of God, but would be ever hewing out broken cisterns that could hold no water. Each required a new principle within, a new birth, living water.

If both obtained this, the blessed result in both would be, spiritual fruits, springing up into everlasting life. The one and the other must ask and obtain this as a free gift, a gift "from above," "the gift of God" and to both our Lord thus in effect said, "*If any man thirst, let him come unto* ME and drink." Here is the "gift of God"—even his dear Son—here is the seed of the new birth,—here the well springing up within the believer, even Christ, "Christ in you, the hope of glory;" and thus we find Paul writing to his Galatian brethren—"My little children, of whom I travail in birth again, *until Christ be formed in you.*" Christ, then, by his death has given himself to his people, that he may dwell in them forever as the fountain of living waters, himself supplying them with every thing which they can possibly need by the way, whether it be power, love, wisdom, or sympathy, until they attain the glorious kingdom above.

But we now advance to the last view which the illustrations of the New Testament give us of Christ's love for his people in his death. Let us listen to the memorable language which he uses regarding himself—

"*I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth in me shall never thirst.*"—John vi. 35.

We have just had our minds directed to him as "living water;" we now would dwell upon the equally blessed truth, that he is "living bread." In the one case, cleansing and refreshing, sanctifying and comforting; in the other, sustaining, nourishing, and supporting unto life eternal. "This is the bread which cometh down from Heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die." "He that eateth of this bread shall live forever." And just as in the former case the point of comparison was probably meant to be between the water flowing from the rock of Horeb, and Christ, the fountain of living water; so here the comparison is distinctly set forth between the manna in the wilderness of old, and this "bread of life" now. Jesus took occasion of the large number of the people who pressed upon him, because they had seen his miracles of the loaves, and had partaken of that supernatural supply, and who, doubtless, had their minds forcibly turned to the miraculous supply of manna to their forefathers, to warn them that man doth not live by bread alone. He urged them not to labor for the meat which perisheth. He at once appealed to

the very incident in their history which was probably uppermost in their thoughts,—"Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness." Well, and what then? They "are *dead*." Turn your attention, then, from the mere carnal view of "what shall we eat," to the spiritual apprehension of what is now within your reach; labor "for that meat which endureth unto life eternal, which the Son of man shall give unto you." "Moses gave you not *that* bread from Heaven," not the bread which excelleth, not that sustenance or nourishment which will feed you and support you forever. It was, indeed, a type, but it was nothing more. "But my Father giveth you the true bread from Heaven." "*I am the bread of life: he that cometh unto me shall never hunger, and he that believeth in me shall never thirst.*"

Our Lord thus intimates to us here, that just as a man eats bread, which is the staff of life to his body, and seeks to appease his hunger by so doing, so by a process which finds here its fullest illustration, must the inner union be effected between him and his people, that he may nourish them forever, and satisfy all their spiritual desires; and he explains what this act of eating bread means, when applied to himself and his people figuratively. It is "coming" to and "believing" in him. Whoever does this—comes to Jesus and believes in him—is feeding on the "true bread" that "cometh down from Heaven, and giveth life unto the world."

Bearing this in mind, let us proceed farther to notice how, as in the figure of "water," the Evangelist in explaining what that meant, adds the important fact that the gushing forth of the spiritual stream depended on the glorification of Christ by his death and passion, so our Lord in this wonderful discourse before us now, distinctly and unequivocally refers to the same solemn event, as absolutely essential for the providing of this "*bread of life*" to the famished soul of man. It was not by simply following him, as those around him were doing *then*, when as he lived and walked among them, he showed forth his marvelous power, in feeding thousands with a few loaves, calming to rest the turbulent billows of Gennesaret, or raising the dead to life again. It was not by simply believing in him, as thus living and working among them, and crying out in amazement, "This is of a truth that prophet which should come into the world." If their coming to him, and belief in him went no further than this, he never could become

"*the bread of life*" to their souls. No! for their life *by* him, he must die for them; and their coming and believing must be to one who "liveth and *was dead*, and behold he is alive again forever more;" or it would be worthless and vain.

And so, we find that having fastened the attention of his hearers on the great truth that he was the true bread from Heaven, and that *coming* to and believing on him would give them participation in this heavenly food, he loses no time in following up this by a clear and emphatic statement regarding his death, as that which must alone make them partakers of the spiritual food they required. This he shows us forcibly in the 51st verse—"I am the living bread which came down from Heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." "He that cometh and believeth on me" must come to and believe on one who "gives his flesh for the life of the world." "Verily, verily, I say unto you," he solemnly adds, "except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." Here is the "living bread" which we are to eat and live forever—to come to and believe in Jesus as one whose blood was poured out from his flesh.

Obviously the whole discourse, therefore, hinges on these points —"Labor not for the meat that perisheth." "Come to me, and I will give you meat which endureth unto life everlasting." I will give you *myself*. "*I am* the *bread of life*." And I will tell you how this bread is to be eaten—by *coming* and *believing*. I will also tell you what it is you are to confess and believe as regards this bread—my *death*. You are to receive me as one pouring out his life blood for the world—a slain offering—a bleeding lamb. *Your* eating is confessing or coming, and believing. *My* preparation for being the living bread, is death.

They who heard Jesus stumbled greatly at these words. They took literally what he meant spiritually. In this way they recoiled in horror from his statement, that this man should not only "give them his *flesh* to eat," but his "*blood*"—the very thing so constantly and carefully forbidden in their law, and any transgression of which was a capital offense—that he should invite them to "drink his blood," was indeed a "hard saying," and they could not bear it. One word our Lord interposed to give those

who were departing and ready to walk no more with him, one opportunity more. What! he said, doth this offend you? even if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before!" unquestionably referring to his ascension. How can you, as if he said, attach such a carnal meaning to my words? But if you do so now, will ye continue to do so, when ye shall see (what by this very declaration is made known to you as certainly to happen) the Son of man, this very body no longer bruised and wounded, the flesh and the blood separated in death, but glorified, and ascending up into Heaven? Surely the anticipation of that glorious event of which I now forewarn you should cast down any such carnal thought in your minds as you are now indulging in. Flesh, in this carnal sense, profiteth nothing. The words that I speak unto you, *they*, if you will but listen to them with unprejudiced minds, and receive them as little children, are spirit and they are life; that is, they are not merely to be taken spiritually, but they vivify, they give life.

Now, did not the walking away of the men who had hitherto followed him, and who, as far as we know, never returned to him any more—did not this fact prove the necessity of our Lord's plain speaking in this matter? As long as his cause was one which was pleasing and gratifying to their carnal minds—as long as they regarded him in the light of one who could feed them at his will, and astonish them by his miraculous power, they were very well content to go on and wait on him, and be numbered among his disciples; but they started aside as a broken bow, when the real truth which they *must* believe, if they were to continue his followers, was brought before them. "They stumbled at that stumbling-stone." Doubtless they made abundant excuses to themselves and neighbors why they could not with propriety identify themselves any longer with a teacher who uttered such strange things; but the real truth was, their "natural hearts received not the things of the Spirit of God." They were *offended* at them, and so it is, and ever will be, with sinful man. It is not a Saviour who merely *appeared* in this world that turns him back with contempt and hatred. No; he might consent to listen to such a teacher, and enroll himself among his followers, if he were, indeed, great, and wise, and good, and powerful. But it is when he is told to believe in a Saviour that has died for "*the life of the*

world," and so *for him*, then his heart rebels against this humbling truth; then the offense of the Cross causes him to stumble, and he either goes away with the carelessness of a Gallio, or he turns against it with the rabid hatred of the judges of the first martyr, who "gnashed on him with their teeth."

It will be seen by the above how utterly groundless is the horrible dogma of the Romish Church as professedly based on this discourse of Jesus. It is abundantly clear that they never drew their *idea* of the doctrine of Transubstantiation from this; but having once possessed themselves with the idea, they, in their eager search after any thing which would defend them, laid violent hands on some portions of this passage, and wickedly claimed it as their own. But passing by this, we can not but remark how strange it is that many persons find in this discourse a direct reference to the Lord's Supper! Surely, when we consider that that feast was not yet instituted, and when the language here used is absolute and unconditional, we can not for a moment entertain this view, unless we go the length of those who exclude all from the kingdom of God who have not partaken of that feast, and some of whom have in consequence uttered such things as come near blasphemy in endeavoring to reconcile their theory with the startling fact of the salvation of the penitent robber on the cross. The following wise and weighty remarks deserve deep consideration, as evidently marking out the true bearing of this discourse. "The question *whether there is here any reference to the* ORDINANCE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER has been *inaccurately put*. When cleared of inaccuracy in terms, it will mean, *Is the subject here dwelt upon, the same as that which is set forth in the ordinance of the Lord's Supper?* And of this there surely can be no doubt. To the *ordinance itself* there is here *no reference*, nor *could* there well have been any. But the spiritual verity which underlies the ordinance is one and the same with that here insisted on; and so considered, the discourse is, as generally treated, most important toward a right understanding of the ordinance."* Oh, if men had but kept this simple landmark in view, how much misery, disquietude, and desolation in the outward church of Christ might have been warded off! If they had looked steadily at the great "spiritual verity" of the sacrifice and death of Christ, and as they gazed

* Alford.

simply and lovingly on that, heard him say, "Except ye eat my flesh and drink my blood ye have no life in you," and then marked from time to time by the way, the elements of bread broken, and wine poured out, significantly pointing to the same verity, and uttering the same thrilling language, how much would have been spared of shame and dishonor to the cause of Christ in the house of his professed friends!

It may not be uninteresting to quote here the very distinct and clear statement of the compilers of the English Liturgy, which so exactly corresponds with the view quoted above. In the office for the communion of the sick, it is said, if any man is hindered from partaking of the sacrament of Christ's body and blood as he desired to do, "then the curate shall instruct him that if he do truly repent him of his sins, and *steadfastly believe that Jesus Christ hath* SUFFERED DEATH UPON THE CROSS *for him, and shed his blood* for his redemption, earnestly remembering the blessings he hath thereby, and giving him hearty thanks therefor, he doth *eat and drink the body and blood of Christ* profitably to his soul's health, although *he did not receive the sacrament by his lips.*"

One remark may not inappropriately be made here. Surely when we see such a discourse as that under review, made by the enemy of all truth the very battle-field on which he has so long and so successfully endeavored to draw away souls from the faith, and plunge them into the depths of false doctrine and deadly error; when, if he can not blind men altogether to the reception of what is so fearful in its character as the Romish dogma, he yet, to a great extent, succeeds in perplexing minds on the most precious things of the Gospel, and confounding ordinances with the verities which they set forth. When he puts forth all his power and craft to do this in connection with such passages as that now before us, we may be sure that he is not only anxious to take up carnal and vain things which can never help or profit, but he is all the while taking the utmost pains, by this very means, to conceal a vital and important truth. When the enemy raises such a cloud of dust as he has done around these simple precious words of Christ, it well becomes us to wait on the breathing of the Spirit of God, that he may dispel the darkness, and give us to receive and keep the blessed truths which Satan would hide from our eyes.

Now there is not to be found in Scripture a clearer or more simple view of one of the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel than in these words, "*Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.*" The justification of the sinner before God is here taught, not in abstract terms, which, it may be, by themselves, could never fully or clearly convey to us this great mystery, but in such a simple figure as to bring it home to the understanding and the heart. These words teach us with great simplicity that justification before God first demands the death of Christ. His body must be broken, and his blood poured out. All the benefit of this must be received in the case of the justified one by faith. This faith is not itself justification, but it unites the justifier with the justified. And this is the great characteristic of it. It does for him spiritually what eating does to the body naturally. It takes Christ crucified, and presents him to the soul, which, by the indwelling power of the Holy Ghost, appropriates and lives upon this heavenly food. It is to him henceforth "the *bread of life*"—life-giving food. And not as the manna which was rained down only at stated periods, this true bread, even Christ himself, is ever within the heart of the believer, so that he hungers no more, but is for ever satisfied, and *has* everlasting life. No wonder, when we have such great and glorious truths so simply taught in these words that Satan should leave no stone unturned to keep men's mind away from them, "lest the light of the glorious Gospel should shine into them."

Surely, then, we have in the death of Christ his wondrous love displayed in what he *is* to his people—the *water* and the *bread* of life. When as the good Shepherd *he* leads his flock in and out, no wonder that they "*find pasture*," since he himself is always with them. No wonder that they, with full hearts and grateful minds, take up such language as this, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in *green pastures*: he leadeth me by the *still waters*."

And here we close the series of parabolic pictures in which the Lord Jesus Christ has been graciously pleased to make known to us some of those great and glorious characteristics which distinguish him as the Prince of the kingdom of light.

PART III.

CHRIST'S WORK OF GRACE, IN ITS PERSONAL AND EXPERIMENTAL CHARACTER.

CHAPTER I.

THE LOST SHEEP—THE LOST PIECE OF SILVER—THE LOST SON.

We now proceed to examine those parables which treat at large and fully of the work of this great Prince and Saviour in bringing into and preparing for his kingdom those whom he loves and saves. They may be profitably regarded under two great divisions. First, as exhibiting Christ's personal and experimental work of grace; and secondly, Christ's external and historical work in the Church and in the world. Of course the one and the other of these will be found from time to time combined in the same parable. Indeed from the very nature of the case it would be impossible to treat of them as absolutely distinct, seeing that all that is historically recorded or prophetically declared of the kingdom of Christ must necessarily include what is doctrinal and practical. Still the division now suggested will serve to place them in such a point of view at least as will remarkably exhibit their fullness and wondrous beauty in the two great departments of Christ's work in the heart and in the world. We turn, then, first, to the personal and practical work of Christ. And in doing so we are met at the outset by three parables which claim priority of attention, which have ever been regarded as wonderful alike for their simplicity and exquisite pathos; and which must always be looked at side by side, if we would gain a full and deep insight into their meaning, inasmuch as the one fills up what is lacking in the other, while all are directed to one and the same subject of illustration. They are not like mirrors set

by chance over against each other, which only confuse, while they multiply the objects they reflect. They are rather like the reflectors in the kaleidoscope, which, by their beautiful and yet simple arrangement and collocation, unite together in presenting to the eye a perfect and orderly figure of exceeding beauty. Let us, then, look at these parables, taking them in succession, and treating them, so far as is necessary, distinctively, but at the same time noting the relative bearing of each upon the other. This latter feature will, of course, come more forcibly before us as we proceed in the examination of the second, and still more of the third parable in the series.

"Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them. And he spake this parable unto them, saying, *What man of you having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, That likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.*"—Luke xv. 1–7.

In order to have a distinct perception of the great leading truth illustrated by this and the following parables, it is essential that we bear in mind throughout, what it was that called them forth. This was an objection urged by the Pharisees and scribes against the conduct of Christ. "This man," they said, "receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." In the opening verse of this chapter we are told that "*publicans* and *sinners*" drew near to hear him. In the objection taken by the Pharisees, "sinners" are only spoken of, because they included the publicans in this expression —the latter being regarded as among the very lowest and most degraded of the people. Indeed there can be little doubt that the *publicans*, who are so often spoken of in the Gospels (not of the higher grade, which was very respectable, but the lower, who farmed the taxes for the other), were regarded by the people generally as even worse and more degraded than such as, by their profligacy or immoral conduct, were specially called *sinners*. The

term sinners, therefore, in the objection urged, must be considered as embracing the publicans mentioned in the first verse, as well as others.

Now we shall be in danger of missing very much the bearing of the parables which were given in order to meet this objection, if we regard in it too exclusively the carping, murmuring spirit of those who made it. It is very natural, in reading the Gospel history, to set down such an accusation as this merely as the expression of unworthy spite, envy, and malice on the part of Christ's chief foes among the people; nor is it improbable that in by far the greater number of cases this was really the case. Still it is possible that some among them may have started objections from a sincere though mistaken conviction of their being well founded, or at least that, with real vindictiveness in their hearts against Christ, they contrived, from time to time, so to shape their objections as that they should appear in some respects really formidable.

Now in the objection under consideration, we must not overlook these points. We must not regard it merely as an ebullition of spite and malice. Had it been so, it would probably have been met in silence, or by such a startling and terrible denunciation as "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" But, in truth, the objection was a most plausible one—it was one which was likely to turn the tide of public opinion against Christ. Nay, more, it was an objection which, if in a *certain* point of view it could have been substantiated, would have utterly condemned the mission of Christ, and held it up to well-deserved reproach. Had our Lord's fellowship with the persons here spoken of been such as this—that he descended to their level—that he held converse with them without rebuking their sins, but, on the contrary, by his silence tacitly encouraging them—had he, in fact, entered *their* territory, in order to have communion with them there, and to sit down and rest with them, and to sup with them, and they with him, amid the impenitence and the unforsaken ungodliness of their ways—*then*, indeed, the objection, "this man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them," would be well founded, and nothing else of power or love on the part of him who did so could wipe away that stain.

It was to clear this important matter that our Lord uttered the

three parables in this chapter. It may be that the Pharisees were only gratifying their malice and hatred in the accusation they made, but Jesus, without giving heed to the spirit which prompted the objection, at once proceeded carefully to vindicate his conduct from any false construction which might be put upon it, while at the same time he took occasion from the accusation itself to set forth, under most remarkable imagery, the true nature of that fellowship in which he himself rejoiced, his "receiving sinners, and eating with them." In considering these parables, therefore, let us bear in mind the objection, not so much in that it *might have been* malicious, for that we do not actually know, but in that *it was* plausible, for that is manifest.

In the first of these as given above, we have the case of a man who owned a hundred sheep—out of this number one had strayed. The careful shepherd did not remark this unconcernedly. He at once adopted measures to bring back the lost sheep if possible. He leaves the ninety and nine in the wilderness, not in what is generally among us termed a wilderness, that is "a dry and thirsty land where no water is," a solitary, barren desert—but such a place as was known by that term to the persons our Lord was addressing—a place where water abounded, where all was fresh and green—such a wilderness as that in which John came preaching and baptizing, or such as that where thousands were fed with a few loaves, and in which we are told there was "much grass;" and so these ninety and nine are left well cared for in "green pastures" and "beside still waters," in peace, safety, and plenty, while the shepherd went to recover the lost one. He sets out on his quest. He takes much pains to discover the wanderer. He does not leave it to others to track it out. He goes after it himself; and he does this *until* he finds it. He is bent on his work of recovery. Nothing hinders him until he succeeds. Then indeed he brings the lost sheep on his shoulders rejoicing. His search is successful. He has found what he wanted. His toil is at an end. He is richly rewarded. He takes sure possession of it. He carries it gently, carefully, and yet so that all should see what he is doing. And when he reaches home, he calls his friends and neighbors together, in order that they may share in the satisfaction with which he finds his journey and his toil so happily concluded.

Now, bearing in mind the objection to which we have already adverted, it will be seen that our Lord, in this first parable, appears at first to give a stronger expression to that objection itself. The parable does not deal with one *receiving*, but with one *seeking*. And so his first mode of dealing with the objection is this:—"You object to my 'receiving sinners, and eating with them.' Well, I not only acknowledge that I do this, but I tell you that my special purpose and object in the mission in which I am now engaged is to *seek out*, to *find*, to *discover* sinners, for this very communion and fellowship in which I rejoice and glory. I am not only 'the friend of publicans and sinners,' but so much their friend that I do not wait for them to come to me, but I must needs go and find out them."

That the shepherd in the parable means Christ there can be no doubt. His own assumption of this character and name in the tenth chapter of John, is conclusive here. Nor must we pass over the remarkable intimations which abound in the Old Testament, and which tell of the Messiah under this character; and especially must we bear in mind such passages as are to be found in Ezekiel xxxiv., where the faithless shepherd is particularly marked out in his faithlessness, and condemned, because he does not seek out and recover the lost or straying sheep of his flock. The faithfulness and tender love of the good shepherd are here set in contrast with those false and faithless shepherds, even as he stands contrasted with the "thief that seeks to enter the fold some other way," and the "hireling, who fleeth when he sees the wolf coming."

But who are the "ninety and nine" sheep left securely and happily in the green pastures, and who the "one of them" which has strayed and is lost? One commentator suggests a solution of the difficulty which lies in the parable here, by saying that it is the "*one lost*" which is the great and prominent subject about which the imagery of the parable is gathered, and after the *straying* of this one is mentioned, he affirms that the "ninety and nine" pass out of sight and are not considered any more. But this is surely inconsistent with our Lord's interpretation so far of the parable, for these "ninety and nine" are brought forward prominently at the *close* of the shepherd's work. The lost one wandered from among them *at first*. He is rejoiced over more

than they all *at last*. Far from passing out of sight, then, they must be kept steadily in view if we would understand the parable aright. And when Jesus speaks of the "ninety and nine" sheep as truly representing "ninety and nine *just persons which need no repentance*," he has given us the key to the interpretation.

It is not for a moment to be admitted that these words of our Lord—so distinct and explicit—mean only "persons who esteemed themselves to be righteous," or wished to be thought righteous in the eyes of others. When he meant such persons, our Lord plainly and unequivocally expressed what he meant, "Ye are they which *justify yourselves* before men: but God knoweth your hearts." And, again, "This parable (the Pharisee and publican in the temple) spake he unto certain which *trusted in themselves that they were righteous*, and despised others." The words of Christ before us are too plain and emphatic to allow of such a reference, unless, indeed, we use the language of Scripture merely as an elastic ring, which can be stretched at will to hold any thing we may thrust within its embrace. There is no instance in our Lord's preaching which can be quoted as laying down such a principle of interpretation as this. For as to that declaration, "I came not to call righteous but sinners to repentance," it surely can not be regarded as an ironical admission on his part that these *were* righteous, or that they were so in their own esteem, but merely that he came to a sinful, not a righteous world. And besides this, the conclusion in the parable is absolutely opposed to such a view. The "*lost sheep*" is rejoiced over *more* than the "ninety and nine," but this very statement proves that the latter were the objects of joy likewise, though not so much as the former. This can in no sense be said of such as "trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others." Indeed nothing can be more opposed to the simple majesty of these parables, and the sublime truth which they illustrate, than to bring such an element as this into the interpretation. It robs them of their beauty, and makes any thing like a consistent view of them impossible.

The difficulty of receiving such an interpretation of the "*ninety and nine*" as the above, is acknowledged to be insurmountable by a recent writer on the parables, who has most admirably and ably added to the store of biblical literature on this subject. He gives up the above view as untenable, and so far clears the ground;

but the view which he entertains, can not, it is conceived, be received as satisfactory, nor does it answer the requirements of the parable more fully than the other. "We may get rid both of this difficulty and of the other by seeing here an example of our Lord's severe yet loving irony. These ninety and nine, needing no repentance, would then be, like those whole who need not, or count that they need not (?) a physician, (Matt. ix. 12,)—self-righteous persons—as such, displeasing to God, and whose present life could naturally cause *no* joy in heaven. So that it would be easy to understand how a sinner's conversion would cause more (?) joy there than the continuance of such in their evil state. But the Lord could hardly have meant to say merely this; and, moreover, the whole construction of the parable is against such an explanation. 'The ninety and nine sheep have *not* wandered; the nine pieces of money have *not* been lost; the elder brother has *not* left his father's house.'"* This last sentence states the matter fairly and justly as it stands in these parables. It must never be lost sight of, if we would come to a satisfactory view of either of them. The sheep left behind were *not* lost. The money left in the house was *not* lost. The elder son never left his father's house, and was *not* lost. But while this writer so clearly states the case as it exists, the explanation which he suggests appears to be in the last degree unsatisfactory. "His own view (he proceeds) of the parables which affords a solution of the difficulties appears to be this—that we understand these '*righteous*' as really such, but also that their righteousness is merely legal, is of the old dispensation, so that the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than they. The law had done a part of its work for them, keeping them from gross positive transgression of its enactments, and thus they needed not, like the publicans and sinners, repentance from these; but it had not done another part of its work—it had not brought them, as God intended it should, to a conviction of sin—it had not been for them 'a schoolmaster to Christ,' and to a glad and thankful embracing of his salvation. The publicans and sinners, though by another path, had come to him; and he now declares, that there was more real ground of joy over one of these who were now entering into the inner sanctuary of faith, than over ninety and nine

* Trench's Notes on the Parables, p. 379.

of themselves, who lingered at the legal vestibule, refusing to go further in."

The objections to this view are altogether insuperable, besides that it is impossible to do otherwise than enter a solemn protest against some of the sentiments here expressed, as strongly militating against the simple principles of the doctrine of Christ.

Is it possible to suppose that our Lord could have alluded to the Pharisees generally under these terms "as *really* 'righteous?'" The Pharisees of whom, when we first read of them in the Gospel history, we find the Baptist crying aloud in his amazement at their coming to hear him, "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"—the Pharisees whom our Lord himself so repeatedly denounced in language unequaled for its solemn and awful force, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" Ye take away the key of knowledge—ye enter not in yourselves, and ye suffer not others to enter in. Ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Ye do all to be seen of men. Ye love the praise of men more than the praise of God. Ye cleanse the outside of the cup and platter, while the inside is full of extortion and excess. Ye are whited sepulchers, full of dead men's bones, and all manner of uncleanness. Ye adorn the tombs of the prophets which your fathers killed. Thus ye say, that ye are their children. Fill up the measure of your iniquity. Ye compass sea and land to discover one proselyte, and when ye have found him, ye make him tenfold more the child of hell than yourselves. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell!

Can we for a moment receive the softening expressions which are applied to such men in the explanation suggested above? It is utterly impossible, unless we would confound all good and evil, right and wrong, righteous and unrighteous together—nay, unless we would make our Lord himself put forth under the guise of a parable a sentiment regarding the Pharisees the very reverse of all that he ever distinctly and emphatically declares concerning them. If it were possible to conceive that our Lord had them in his mind as the parties represented by the ninety and nine in the parable, there is no escape from the conclusion that while he was vindicating his admission of sinners to himself, he was at the same time nourishing to the very utmost of his power the pride, the

self-righteousness, the legal spirit of the Pharisees, making them comfortable in the possession of those very principles which were the prolific source of the ungodliness he so vividly and terribly denounced.

But more than this. Granting what the above writer affirms regarding the real righteousness of these men, (which we hold to be entirely opposed to the doctrine of Christ,) but granting this for a moment, the explanation does not in the least degree meet the requirements of the parable, even as stated by this writer himself. He says, "the ninety and nine" have *not* wandered. But does the fact of their real *legal* righteousness consist with this? On the contrary, it disproves it. Just as the righteousness of faith proves that he who is covered by it *has* wandered, so the righteousness which is of the law proves that he who thinks he can cover himself with it *has* wandered also. The explanation, then, fails here in its most important, and, indeed, essential point.

Further, it fails here also. The writer says, "Thus they needed not, like the publicans and sinners, *repentance from these*—from gross, positive transgression." But inasmuch as the "law had not done another part of its work," in bringing them to Christ, as "God intended" it should do, they *needed* repentance here. But in direct opposition to this, our Lord says, "just persons who need NO repentance."

Once more. "He (Christ) declares that there was more real ground of joy over one sinner," etc., so that there *was* some ground of joy over those "who lingered at the legal vestibule, refusing to go in." They are persons who cling to a righteousness of which our Lord positively said, that if they had no more, they could "in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven," and yet there is some ground of joy over such as these! Surely it needs but to state these things to prove how utterly untenable all those views are which would seek to identify the "ninety and nine" sheep who *never* strayed, and the "just persons who need *no* repentance" with the bitterest enemies of Christ, the most determined opposers of his Gospel, whose conduct drew forth from him the most solemn warning he ever uttered, regarding such a sin, or rather course of sin, as should never be forgiven either in this world or in the world to come.

But another and insuperable objection to this interpretation

must be briefly noticed. If these "ninety and nine just persons" are Pharisees in their legal righteousness, *whence* was it that the publicans or the sinners strayed from them? How could it ever be said, with any propriety, that like as one sheep separates itself from the flock, wanders away and is lost, so the publicans and sinners separated themselves from these righteous Pharisees—wandered away and were lost? Such an interpretation utterly destroys the meaning of the parable in one of its essential features, namely, the straying of the lost sheep. And if it were the true interpretation, what but this must have been to the Pharisees the certain conclusion, so grateful to their self-love, "The publicans and the sinners have wandered and are lost, but *I* have never wandered. I am not one of the *lost* sheep of the house of Israel." How differently our Lord deals with their case is manifest from such a parable as that of the Pharisee and publican, wherein the two characters are by it statedly and expressly on the scene. The man who thought himself righteous—sincere enough in his own conviction—and the poor, humbled, penitent publican—the last went down to his house justified rather than the other; "for every one," adds Christ, "that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

Nor is it unimportant to notice here what our Lord says of these very Pharisees in another parable, which plainly exhibits what he desired to inculcate on all who heard him regarding them. In the parable of the two sons required by their father to work in his vineyard, the second promised to go and went not. This son, by our Lord's own interpretation, means the Pharisee, and the other is the publican; and so he adds that while the latter were pressing into the kingdom of heaven before their faces, the former "*repented not.*" Is it possible to suppose that our Lord would contradict the teaching of one parable by that of another?—that in one he would charge with "repenting *not*," the very same parties of whom in another he said, "they *need no* repentance?"

We dismiss, then, as utterly untenable, and altogether inconsistent with the simple story of the parable, all interpretations which would identify the "*ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance*" with the Pharisees. That such interpretations have been entertained at all—that they have continued to hold

their ground so long—that they are so generally acquiesced in—proceeds obviously from neglecting to notice what, it is conceived, is so essential to a due perception of the meaning of these parables, namely, that the Pharisees who made the objection calling them forth are not so much to be considered as the *objection itself*. Once let that objection be properly set aside—once let the flood of Divine light from the Son of righteousness be poured down on that wondrous truth, Christ receiving sinners, admitting them to his fellowship, honoring them by his presence, calling them his friends—once let this be fairly and distinctly set forth and explained—let but the lips of him who never yet spake as man spake be opened to illustrate the grand and glorious fact, that God and the *sinner* are reconciled—*then*, all that was plausible in the objection made is dispersed as a cloud before the wind; and *then*, too, in the most emphatic manner, the Pharisees will have their answer.

Let us then turn to the parable, and see whether there be not one explanation of it which in all its parts is consistent with itself—which retains the natural simplicity of the story itself, without forcing into the interpretation any thing which does not necessarily and obviously belong to the great truth illustrated.

It is admitted that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Shepherd. Who, then, are the "*ninety and nine*" sheep who went *not* astray—the "*ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance?*" The interpretation glanced at by Theophylact, and received with favor by Hilary, is that which is unhesitatingly adopted here as the only one which can satisfy the condition now mentioned. "These (the ninety and nine) the good Shepherd left in the wilderness, that is, in the higher heavenly places; for heaven is this wilderness, being sequestered from all worldly tumult, and fulfilled with all tranquillity and peace."* He left them in the heavenly places, secure, happy, peaceful, unfallen, amid plenty, and in glory, while he went forth himself to seek the one erring, wandering, hapless sheep that had gone astray on the mountains of vanity—fallen, degraded, and lost *man*. Alford, in his admirable notes on the Old Testament, gives the alternative which is here accepted: "Or, if it be required that the words should be literally explained, seeing that these ninety-nine did *not err*, then I

* See Trench, p. 379, note.

see no other way but to suppose them, in the deeper meaning of the parable, to be the *worlds that have not fallen*, and the one that has strayed, *our human nature*, in this one world."

This extract touches the matter with the point of a needle. The words in the parable must be regarded as *literally* meaning that the ninety and nine did *not err;* for if not, there is no possible escape from the conclusion, that the straying of the one sheep can not be *literal* either. Let us endeavor to follow out this interpretation in the several particulars of the parable.

Man as originally created, though made a little lower than the angels, was yet a meet and suitable companion of angels. He reflected the image of his Maker in his being, even as they do in theirs. He enjoyed the fullness of his Maker's favor even as they. God's delight was with him even as with them. Holiness and obedience were required of him even as of them. Happiness, peace, joy, life, were secured to him even as to them, if he continued obedient. The history of man, as revealed to us in the Inspired Word, scarcely opens—it scarcely begins to unfold to us man's happy condition, walking with God, and God with him, in want of nothing, for God was with him as his Shepherd, making him to lie down by pastures of tender grass, and by the waters of quietness—scarcely does revelation cause this bright and glowing picture to open before us than a cloud comes over it, and turns all its brightness into the shadow of death. Man's habitation is quickly changed. We see him for one brief moment in Eden, amid bowers of beauty and unutterable loveliness—the friend and companion of all that is holy and happy; the next, we find him dwelling in a world which is accursed—thorns and thistles springing up around him—light gone from his eye—the nobleness of his image changed—darkness, thick darkness, around him—and fear, doubt, anxiety, and danger, his constant companions. It is the very original of the parabolic picture before us—man went astray as a sheep strays from its fold.

Nor must we forget to notice what has repeatedly been urged by commentators here—that while in the fold, and amid their pastures, sheep give us a striking image of peace, security, and plenteousness; on the other hand, in the straying of a sheep we have set forth a blind and stupid ignorance. None can miss the truthfulness of the illustration here who has chanced to observe

a sheep that has wandered from its companions. And so as regards man. What ignorance, what doltish stupidity did he manifest when he put forth his hand and took of that fruit which was forbidden him to taste—as if by breaking the commandment of Him who made him, and gave him all things richly to enjoy, he could make himself wiser, better, and happier! What unutterable folly, to barter Paradise and its glorious life for the eating of an apple!

Then how apt is the illustration further. The sheep that has strayed, wanders on, continually increasing its distance from the flock. And so with fallen man. He is not satisfied merely with losing the companionship of the holy and the pure—he has wandered further and further away from God continually. Then, too, it may be, the heedlessness of man may be represented here. Perhaps, at first, the stray sheep may feel alarm when it finds itself separated from its companions. This, however, very soon wears off. The pasture it has chosen for itself may suffice for the present; and as it wanders on, cropping here and there in its perverse way what suits its taste, it may go on in fancied security, and with no desire to retrace its steps. And so with man. When first the awful sentence was passed upon him, and he was driven out of Paradise, a terrible dread gathered around his soul; but this passed away, and he has in his grievous wandering from God, learned so to solace himself with the things he has chosen for himself, as to become heedless and careless of all that has been lost.

Then, too, the stray sheep is exposed to the greatest peril, and that of various kinds. Noxious, deadly things, may be mistaken for wholesome, pleasant food. Darkness will overtake it, and destruction become imminent. An imprudent step, or a beast of the field may suddenly and forever close its wanderings And so with man. He is surrounded on every side with threatening danger. He has lost the perception with which he may discern truly between that which is deadly and that which is wholesome. His feet stumble on the dark mountains. His own folly may quickly close the story of his sad wandering, and Satan triumph in the everlasting ruin of his soul.

Such was the picture which presented itself before the eyes of the Son of God when man fell away and wandered from his fold.

How full of deep and affecting pathos are the words of this Son of God himself, when he actually set out upon his mission of mercy, and when he looked upon poor fallen human nature, not *now* as he had done before, when seated on his throne, and determined to seek and save the lost, and when, in the likeness of man, he stood among the children of men. "When he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, (were tired and lay down, *margin*,) and were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd." It was thus he had looked down from heaven, when man first strayed from his kind and gentle care, and he resolved to seek out the wanderer, at whatever cost or trouble to himself. The "ninety and nine" are dear to him. They have *not* wandered, and he delights in them still. There is but *one* gone. Surely that will not be missed. He may allow it to wander. He has enough left. He may give himself no thought or care about the ungrateful, thoughtless one which has gone! Not so are his ways or his thoughts. He will not love "the ninety and nine" less. He will not care for them less; nay, he will show them that he cares for them even more than they could have conceived—by his leaving them safe as they were, and happy, in order that he may never rest until he has restored their wandering companion to them again. What a new spring must have been opened in heaven, of loving confidence in the care of the good Shepherd when he set himself to the task of finding out and bringing back his lost sheep. What new impressions of Divine love must have been created in the minds of the holy and glorious hosts of God by such a manifestation of tender self-denying care on the part of the good Shepherd!

Then mark how the parable puts it:—"*If he lose one of them.*" The wandering of the sheep is counted by him as *his* loss. He can not regard it in any other light. And so as regards man. Whatever be the ruin and wretchedness he has brought upon himself, still, let it be remembered, that by his fall the great King has been deprived of a bright jewel. The fine gold which he had prepared of honor and glory unto himself, in this lower world, has become dim. The Son of God, then, would not suffer himself to be forever deprived of this jewel. And just as the shepherd sets forth in the parable to seek *until* he find his stray sheep, so He set forth on his quest of pity and of mercy.

In this part of the parable, the incarnation of the Son of God is plainly intimated. The shepherd sent not his servants forth to bring back the lost. He did not remain at home and issue his commands for the recovery of his sheep. He set out *himself,* left his home, followed the sheep in its wanderings till he found it. Obviously this directs our attention to the Son of God leaving his glory, "emptying himself of his reputation," and never ceasing until he stood face to face with the sinner on the ground of his wandering, until he personally sought him out in his low and lost estate, until he *found* him sunk as he was in the depths of sin, and far, far removed from his Father's house. This he did by taking man's nature on him. It was thus he *came near* to him. It was thus he stood face to face with him in his wandering, and made preparation for his being brought back and restored to glory, honor, and immortality. When this good Shepherd set out on his errand of mercy, all heaven bowed down to speed him on his way, and rang again with the loud hosannas of expectant joy.

All that the Lord Jesus Christ did in the flesh for the poor lost soul of man is graphically set forth in this parable by the single expression, "*He went after that which was lost until he found it.*" This embraces the whole work of toil, self-denial, and sacrifice which he voluntarily underwent, in order that he might get at the lost soul to save it. All the sufferings of his life and death are comprised in his thus "going after the lost soul until he find it." He had counted the cost, and nothing deterred him from pursuing until he found. Oh, who can describe what that cost must have been! We behold it terribly distinct at Calvary, when he was close upon the lost one, just finding him—with all the darkness and the sorrow of the accursed tree, the hiding of his Father's face, the desertion of friends, the bitter spite of enemies, and the faintness of bodily suffering. We see it distinctly, too, in the garden of Gethsemane, when not even his truest followers could watch with him one hour in his agony. When he prayed and agonized alone, "his soul being exceeding sorrowful even unto death." Yet these were but the closing scenes of his long journeying after his lost one. His whole course from first to last, through thirty years and more, was but one continued contradiction of sinners against him. He toiled, and labored,

and struggled always as a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He bent his steps in one way to find the lost; but each of these steps was one of untold sadness, suffering, reproach, and trouble, to the kind, loving, good Shepherd.

Now, watch the Shepherd who has gone after his lost sheep, and after a long, weary, and fatiguing search, borne, nevertheless, unflinchingly, because he knew what he was doing, whither he was going, and where he would find his strayed sheep—observe him as he finds it—his search successful—his *setting forth* after it—his "*going out*" after it, happily at an end. "*When he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders rejoicing.*" And so just as the going forth of the shepherd till he find his sheep presents before us the Lord Jesus Christ in his work of sorrow, and trial, and self-denying love for his people; so the returning of the shepherd marks his glorious and happy return with the fruit of the travail of his soul. The power of Christ is here revealed. Just as the shepherd lays his sheep on his shoulders, so Christ bears his ransomed, his redeemed one, by his mighty power when he has found him. He does not drive him in his weariness, or require him to follow in his weakness. He carries him by his own might. He lifts him by his strong hand and his almighty power, and "makes a show openly" of what he has done in delivering his poor erring child; and he does all this "rejoicing." His pain, sorrow and struggle are over. He has paid the price which he knew was required. He faltered not a moment till this was done to the uttermost. And now, as he leads captivity captive, he goes on his way rejoicing, his humiliation passed forever; and glory, the glory of redemption, that key-note of the new song in heaven—that new, and of all his crowns the brightest, fills him with unutterable joy.

And then mark the language of the parable. "When he cometh home." This does not mean, as some have supposed, that the shepherd on his return brought his lost one to the house instead of placing it again in the fold. Such a view would mar the simple, natural story of the parable. All that is meant by it is this. The shepherd succeeded in his search which took him from home, or from his house; and he returned home with his lost one found. The evident purpose of the introduction of such words is, to impress upon the hearts of all God's ransomed ones

this precious truth, that when the Saviour carries them by his power from the place of danger to the place of safety *he* is going home, and therefore so are *they*. His home is their home. His place of rest theirs. In his Father's house are many mansions, and the end of their salvation will be in its perfect happiness to realize in the presence of God, and Christ, and the holy angels, in its utmost and highest perfection, all that rises in the heart, and speaks of calm, gently joy in that one blessed word, *home*.

And now, before noticing briefly the closing part of this parable, it is important that we observe the following particulars in it, and the great truths it illustrates. In the story itself we see the shepherd setting out, and then returning home successful, and rejoicing with others at his success. Thus it was in Christ's work. He left his glory to come down to this world to seek and save the lost; and as soon as he had accomplished his work, made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness, he *returned*, he went back, ascended up where he was before, and now sits at the right hand of the Majesty on high. In so doing he virtually bore back with him that which he came to save. He held forever safe the souls whom he redeemed. They were now his in the bonds of the everlasting covenant, which his own blood had ratified and sealed; and besides all this, his own presence in the courts of heaven, not now merely as the Son of God, but as the Son of Man, was but the first-fruit and the pledge that every one of his own people is safe forever from the fury of the destroyer. This has been already effected. The safety of his ransomed ones is already secured. But the time is yet to come when they will each and every one of them be seen restored and happy in the heavenly fold. And thus our Lord in explaining and enforcing the parable does not say, "There *is* joy in heaven," but "*I say unto you, that likewise joy* SHALL BE *in heaven over one sinner*, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance."

Not that he means by this that the joy does not exist now; but it shall not be manifested forth among the mighty hosts of God by things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, until the day when each and all of the redeemed shall be presented spotless before God in glory. But when that day arrives, then it shall be seen how there is greater joy in heaven

over the restoration of this once lost, but now found child, than over all those who have never wandered. "*Joy in heaven!*" Joy throughout heaven. Joy from the center to the widest borders of the paradise of God. Joy on the Throne, in the heart of the mighty God himself—deep, unutterable wondrous joy in the bosom of Jehovah. Joy amid the hosts of God. Those hosts who sang their hymns of praise when earth appeared robed in her fair mantle of beauty, fresh from her Maker's hand—those hosts who bowed down to herald the approach of the Son of God on his mission of mercy—those hosts who look into the great work he came to finish, with the unwearied intelligence of their perfect understanding, and the ever-increasing glow of their perfect love—joy shall be among them, too, when the lost one shall be restored. The broken link in the glorious creatureship of Jehovah shall be repaired. The jewel shall be restored to the Master's crown. The rooms in heaven's mansions so long empty shall be filled. And with all this, the pledge and the security shall be given to all the holy and pure in heaven that sin's power is at an end, and that never again can it enter one of the fair fields of God's creation, and spread desolation, ruin and death there.

But this joy will be greater than over the "*ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance.*" As regards the Son of God himself it will be greater, because he will see in them "the fruit of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." He created the angels, and gave them all their beauty, their strength, their happiness, and their glory. They sprang into being at his mighty word, and he has surrounded them with every thing which can minister to their glorious and exalted position in his kingdom. But for the restoration of poor lost humanity he did far more than this. He it was that created man at first, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and "without him was not any thing made that was made," which could minister to man's happiness, comfort, and joy. Thus he held an equal place with angelic beings in the relationship subsisting between the wise, good, and bountiful Creator, and his obedient and happy creatures. Whatever the joy of God in the one, it was of the same character as his joy in the other. But when he would bring back this human nature after it had fallen and been lost, he must not

only put forth creative energy so as to make new all that had fallen into decay, and build up what had crumbled into ruins; he must also himself take upon him the very nature, with all pertaining to it, except its sin, and by a long course of suffering and sorrow, closed by an ignominious death, procure at this cost, and by nothing less, the object he had in view. When, therefore, the Son of God shall look on his gathered saints at last, he will behold in them not only creatures who by that simple relationship afford to him pure and perfect joy, but he will specially look on them as the fruit of his own sorrow and suffering. And just as the latter was bitter, terrible, and agonizing, so will his joy be exceeding great when he presents them to himself at last without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, redeemed by his own precious blood, bought with the price he alone could pay—and above all, in whose inner joy at their deliverance, and their inheritance of glory, he is not merely interested as one looking on, but which he shares with them as their elder brother. The nature which he assumed, and which was common to him and fallen man, enabled him to suffer, and also to become the way by which man might rise up in sympathy of love and joy with Jehovah. And it likewise furnished to himself that wherein he might *experience* the accumulated joy, *feel it as if it were his own*, of all his ransomed children.

And so too, among the hosts of heaven, greater joy will be felt in connection with the story of man's recovery from his wandering and death, than in any thing connected with their own history. If redemption has given a new song to the saints of God, which they shall sing forever in heaven, let it not be forgotten that it is a song in the chorus of which "every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea," shall join. The presence of these restored ones in heaven has opened up new glories in heaven itself. The angels see, what had never appeared before "in the midst of the throne, a Lamb as it had been slain." This tells them the wondrous story of God's wisdom, power, and love. It makes known to them these things in such force and to such an extent as they never understood before. It gives them a deeper insight than they could ever have otherwise possessed of the ground on which they stand as holy and responsible creatures, while, at the same

time, it gives them unutterable confidence in the stability of the government of God's kingdom, of the increase, prosperity, peace, and safety of which there shall now be no end. It affords them a further view into the resources of the divine mind. It shows them how he can bring good out of evil, and make even the threatened desolation of his kingdom the very means by which it shall never be moved. It causes them to see, as they never could before, the *love* of God—love which has been tested—love which has been sorely tried—love which has triumphed—love which many waters could not quench, but whose everlasting glory could alone be manifested by the story of the Good Shepherd bringing back his strayed ones rejoicing. And, beside all this, though the connection is not so close, so dear, so precious to them as to the redeemed themselves—though it is not their exalted and glorious privilege to be the Lamb's bride, the new, the holy Jerusalem, of which the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple, yet are they "ministering spirits" to this bride—yet do they delight to regard themselves as "fellow-servants" with God's people, who have "the testimony of Jesus." Thus, too, the bond of a common nature which has linked so closely together the saved one with him who sits upon the throne, has also exalted creatureship itself so gloriously, that no wonder if, in the wider circle of the angelic throng as they surround the throne of God, nearest to which stand those who can cast their golden crowns and cry, "He was slain *for us*," the inspired Evangelist saw in vision myriads who caught up the inner joy that spread from the holy of holies through the ranks of the redeemed, and "heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the living creatures, and the four-and-twenty elders, and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, even thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, *Worthy is the Lamb* that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing."

See, then, what this parable unfolds to us regarding the great truth that God is reconciled to the *sinner*. Our Lord not only admits this, but he puts it in its strongest point of view. He represents himself as leaving heaven in order to seek out the sinner that he may bring him back, and still more wondrously, he declares that the return of this sinner, his sitting down with the

holy and good in heaven, will be the cause of greater joy than can spring from those who have never wandered. Jesus thus gave the objection urged in its fullest length. He makes it as forcible as possible—"You charge me with receiving sinners—true; but I tell you more—I go after them until I find them, and when I bring them back there is greater joy than over just persons who never strayed." And yet, let it be observed, how at the same time he intimates a condition absolutely inseparable from all this, but which is not set forth in the imagery of this first parable, although it appears in a subsequent one. In a single word, He states his vindication of himself from any reproach in having fellowship with sinners, making it the key-note to which he will again recur, while he dwells at large upon the glorious work he took occasion to unfold. Mark that word—"*I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in Heaven over one sinner that* REPENTETH," &c. He seeks out sinners—endures all suffering until he finds sinners—carries them home rejoicing, and makes heaven ring with new shouts of joy by reason of his finished work. But the *sin* has been left behind. It has been blotted out in its condemning power. The guilt of it has been lost in the depths of his own mighty sacrifice and death; and the stain and the pollution of it have been by grace put away from the sinner, so that as rebellion marked his wandering *from* God, so now repentance marks his return again *to* God.

We proceed, then, to the second parable in this series.

"*Either what woman, having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbors together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost. Likewise, I say unto you, There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.*"—Luke xv. 8–10.

It is unnecessary to dwell on the simple story of this parable. We at once, then, direct attention to that which it illustrates; and while we shall see that the great truth of the former parable, namely, man in his lost condition, appears equally as the leading truth here, yet it is presented before us in an entirely new and deeply interesting aspect.

And first, then, as to that which in this parable represents the

lost soul of man—"a piece of money"—this takes the place of the "lost sheep" in the first parable. A great deal of ingenuity has been spent by ancient commentators, as well as by many modern ones, on this part of the parabolic picture. It does not appear, however, to have led to any satisfactory result. The prevailing idea that in the introduction of a piece of money into the imagery, there is intended to be intimated the fact, that man was originally created in the image of God, even as the coin bears the image and superscription of the king or ruler of the country where it is current, but that this image has become greatly defaced, and that even as it is, it is lost in darkness and amid the corruption and pollution of this sinful world—is an interpretation which seems to rest upon altogether too slender grounds to recommend itself to the mind as the true one. It is too recondite, and far too uncertain; for, first of all, the piece of money here spoken of in the parable was the drachma, a Greek coin, and it is extremely doubtful whether there was on it any image of a king at all. Indeed, it is remarkable that an able writer who has yielded to the "delight of tracing a resemblance to the human soul, (in the piece of money,) originally stamped with the image and superscription of the great king, ('God created man in his own image,')" is obliged to confess in a note—"It is true that against this view it may be said that the Greek drachma, the coin here particularly named, had not, like the Roman denarius, the image and superscription of the emperor upon it, but commonly some image, as of an owl, or tortoise, or head of Pallas!" Surely this is sufficient to set aside every such interpretation as that now mentioned, as unworthy of the simple story in hand, notwithstanding its fascination to some minds.

But, even granting that the piece of money here spoken of had the image and superscription of the emperor on it, this would be a very fallacious representation of the lost soul of man. In the latter the image is not simply to a considerable extent defaced; it is *totally obliterated*. We might as well speak of life partly remaining with the dead, as the image of God partly left upon the fallen soul. "In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die," was the warning. Man did eat, and *died*. By that spiritual death the stamp of resemblance to his heavenly King was utterly and entirely lost. *Lost*, as much as in the case of the fallen an-

gels, though, blessed be God, not like them beyond the possibility of being renewed and restored, when passed through the fire and melted, and stamped with God's image afresh, under such conditions of peace and love, that the ceaseless ages of eternity as they roll on shall never find the sharpness of even the minutest portion of this new creation impaired or worn away.

What, then, is the meaning of the "*piece of money*," as representing the lost soul? Obviously, it is added in the second parable, in order to complete and fill up what the figure of a "*lost sheep*" in the first fails to present before the mind. When a sheep strays from the shepherd, and wanders away from the footsteps of the flock, it *does* sometimes happen, it *may* frequently happen, that the sheep that has wandered shall, by some happy accident, find its own way back, and that uninjured, to the fold. It has stupidly and ignorantly wandered out; it may as stupidly and ignorantly wander in again. But it will not do to leave this as a possible result regarding that solemn and important truth illustrated—the *lost* soul. It will not do to leave it to be implied that by any possibility or in any way, the soul once lost can ever find its own way back to God; and thus the second parable gives us the figure of the lost piece of money to enforce *this* part of the truth upon us. The lost sheep might wander back—the lost piece of money can never, by any possibility, find its own way back again to the purse. As it falls, when lost, so must it lie forever, as far as its own power goes, or until lifted up by something extraneous to itself; and thus the use of this figure in the parable supplies an important link in the series of these truths involved in the fall of man. It tells us, that as far as regards all power to help himself, he is dead. More than this, that this death prevents the possibility of his making even accidentally, so to speak, a movement in the right direction. It is the parabolic picture in these three stories before us, of the sinner "*dead* in trespasses and sins."

But, besides this, the selection of this figure suggests another reflection. In the case of the wandering sheep, there may remain some faint, instinctive recollection of the fold, and when darkness and danger surround it, or the pangs of hunger fasten upon it, some instinctive effort to recover what it has lost. But the figure of the *piece of money* tells us that, in the case of the lost soul, even the consciousness of his condition is awanting. He is lost, but he

knows it not. He is in danger, but he heeds it not. He has forfeited his father's favor; he cares not. He is a victim of Satan; he does not believe it. He calls himself lord in this world, when he is nothing better than a slave. He is as unconscious of his real condition, fallen, degraded, lost, and in danger of eternal ruin, as the "*piece of money*" is unconscious that it is lying lost amid the darkness and the dust where it has been dropped.

But is there not an additional illustration supplied to us in this parable regarding the recovery of the lost soul, in the figure of the woman lighting the candle and seeking for the lost piece of money, just as that piece of money itself supplies a very important one, as we have seen? Doubtless it does. It has been suggested by Trench, that the woman with her candle, represents the Church of God with the Word of God seeking (though only as she is filled with the Holy Ghost) for lost sinners within the house, that is, the visible Church. But this is in every respect most unsatisfactory. It introduces a new element into the framework of these parables altogether at variance with their simple and clear purpose. If this be the true interpretation, then the illustration in this second parable is not so much God and sinners reconciled—God "in Christ," receiving sinners, as the Church receiving sinners—not so much God in Christ engaged in seeking out and finding, which is the great point of the first parable, and which is equally necessary to the second, but the Church seeking out and finding. Nor is this objection at all qualified or removed by the assertion that all this is only done by the Church as filled with the Spirit of God, for this still leaves the fact illustrated, not as it ought to be, God and *God alone* dealing with sinners in the way of seeking out and receiving, but those very sinners themselves, though in their new and changed condition, as members of Christ, children of God and heirs of glory.

But more than this. Granted that the figure of the woman with the lighted candle means the Church, then we do not find in Scripture any warrant at all for our speaking of the Church collectively in this manner. Men are commissioned and sent forth to preach the Gospel to every creature. They have intrusted to them a great and glorious mission—to tell in the ears of all, of peace, and hope, and life, for a guilty world—to proclaim glad tidings of great joy unto all people, that whosoever believeth in

Christ shall be saved. This is all that the holiest, the most true and faithful servant of the Lord Jesus can do, in the great work of Redemption. And equally is this all that the whole body of the faithful at any one period of the Church's history can ever attempt to do. The message may be published—sinners entreated to come—warnings threatened—promises offered. But this is all—and surely this is a very different thing from *finding* the lost! The Church, as a body or individually, may *tell* of God's love, his willingness to save, but Scripture lays down emphatically the limit, and oh! let not man attempt to make any change here: "Paul may plant, and Apollos may water, *but God giveth the increase*." The *seeking which ends in finding* must be his and his alone. *His* glory will he not give to another. We dismiss, then, this interpretation, as inconsistent with the scope and bearing of those parables, which are directed to one point, *Christ* and not the Church receiving sinners—as not warranted by Scripture but condemned by it—and as dishonoring to Him who alone can effectually seek so as to find. The woman lights her candle, and sweeps the house, and seeks diligently "TILL SHE FIND IT."

Another interpretation, less liable to objection than this, inasmuch as it does not make the woman in the parable represent the Church of Christ, does nevertheless appear to be unsatisfactory in regarding the *house* as the Church—that is, the external Church. This is inconsistent with the fact illustrated, for lost souls are not only sought out and found within the limits of the visible Church: they are found throughout the whole world, and the finding of the lost piece of money is as truly realized when the idolater leaves his idol, the heathen his superstition, the savage his ignorance, as when the nominal Christian leaves his formalism and is placed among those who are "precious in the sight of the Lord."

Surely the explanation of the parable ought to proceed on simpler grounds than these. The scenery of the first is chosen because so admirably adapted to the special view of truth required, that is, the powerful recovery of the lost soul by the exertions of Christ himself. Every thing connected with this is in admirable keeping in the figure of a flock of sheep—a stray one of the flock, and the shepherd himself going after it till he find it, and then laying it on his shoulders rejoicing. So in the parable now before us. Inasmuch as the main point brought out here

is the utter helplessness of the sinner, and his unconsciousness of his state, under the figure of a lost piece of money; where but within a house could this better be set forth—where lighting a candle, sweeping, and searching are required in the illustration of this piece of money when found? And since it is a woman in the parable who does this, why need we go further than to say that these things, so simply and naturally introduced into the story of this parable, are just woman's work generally in the house, and, therefore, there is a fitness in setting before us a woman, and not a man, in this parable, just as there is a fitness of the same description in the parable of the woman leavening her three measures of meal, inasmuch as this was well known by the hearers of our Lord as the usual employment of women. We need no more than this in the explanation of the figure in this parable, and thus, too, we have in its simple grandeur the great truth which is the subject of the illustration.

This subject is God seeking for the sinner. He appears before us in the first parable, as *in* Christ *personally*, engaged in the special work of redemption for the sinner, following him into the wilds of his transgression, and recovering him from them. In the parable before us he appears again with the same purpose in view, but under another aspect; not now as a shepherd, but a woman who has lost a piece of money, and who lights a candle, and sweeps the house, and seeks diligently till she find it. On this, a recent commentator remarks: "The sinner lies in the dust of sin, and death, and corruption; then the Spirit, lighting the candle of the Lord, searching every corner, and sweeping every unseen place, *finds out* the sinner." This parable, therefore, sets forth to us the work of God the Holy Spirit for the accomplishment of the great purpose of Jehovah in the recovery of the lost. And the order in these illustrations is just what we might expect—Christ first, the Spirit following. It is alone by the direct, personal work of the Son of God in the flesh—by his sufferings and death, in virtue of this meritorious passion, that the Spirit works at all. Unless Christ's work had been perfected *for* the sinner, the Spirit's work had never been begun *in* the sinner. It was necessary, first of all, to consecrate the new and living way by which the sinner may return to God, before the Spirit finds him and draws him into that way.

And then take note of the adaptation of the diferent parts of the illustration to this view. The "*piece of money*" lost, represents man's soul in darkness and corruption—unconscious of its own condition—helpless in any way to save itself—dead, in fact, in sin. How admirably proportioned then to this one side of the parable is that of the other—the woman with her candle, sweeping the house, seeking diligently till she find the piece of money, as representing the work of the Holy Spirit bringing light to the dark soul, separating it from corruption, making it sensible of its condition, helping it as it never could help itself, and, in fact, raising the dead to life.

Nor must we omit to notice further in the mere placing of this parable between that of the lost sheep and the prodigal son, that this arrangement seems to be specially suitable, when we think of the recovery of the lost in these two ways—first, as being restored by the power and through the merits of the Son of God; and next, as being, in consequence of this meritorious work, received into favor by "*the Father.*" In the very midst of this, there is set forth in the parable before us, the Spirit's part in this work. He, by *his seeking* and *finding* brings to the lost soul all the merits of the Son's work. And under the all-powerful stimulus of the new motives thus given—the new light thus bestowed—the new life thus implanted—leads the soul to say, "I will arise, and go to my Father." And this location of the Spirit's work between the carrying back by the Son, and the hearty reception by the Father, is still more significant when we remember the terms in which our Lord himself spake of these recovered ones, in their relation to the Father and to himself—"All mine are thine, and thine are mine," The Father gives them to the Son. "Thou gavest them me." The Son restores them to the Father: "To them gave he power to become the sons of God." Now, in both these gifts the Holy Spirit exercises his love and power, and is one with the Father and the Son. He finds out, and leads every soul that the Father gives to Christ, and never tarries until he has sealed him in his heart and on his forehead as one with his Divine Master, even the good Shepherd of the sheep. And when at length the Son shall himself present his chosen ones before his Father—"Behold me, and the children whom thou hast given me," then shall all these be holy and without blemish by the

same Spirit's work in his sanctifying power, making them meet to stand in the presence of God and in the kingdom of their Father forever.

In the great truth which Christ was illustrating—the sinner in fellowship with himself, in other words, with God—it was absolutely necessary to give special prominence to this precious work of the Spirit. Christ had himself declared that "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." And this "*drawing*" by the Father, he thus expresses further; "*Every man, therefore, that hath heard and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.*" Here, then, is the dead soul made to hear and to learn, and he is thus drawn by the Father unto Christ. Well, then, our Lord adds, "It is the Spirit that quickeneth." This is the Spirit's work, and his alone. None but he can thus seek and find; but when he begins his work, none can let or hinder it. He never commences his search without finding the lost, and restoring it from spiritual death to spiritual life. And thus the Apostle embraces, in a single sentence, the work of the Son and of the Spirit, when speaking of the common ground on which both Jew and Gentile stand before God in the matter of salvation: "For through him, that is *Christ*, we both have access by one *Spirit* unto the *Father*." And so the Spirit's work is complete. The end of that work is the restoration of the lost to glory with the Father; and the way by which that end is attained is through the Son.

And may we not add that there is an individuality suggested by this seeking and finding which there is not in the first parable. This, doubtless, appears still more strikingly in the last of the three parables; but still it seems to be glanced at in the one before us. The seeking and finding, in the first parable, has more to do with man as a race, and with the restored family of Christ, collectively at last. This parable seems rather to point out to us the individual and personal discovery of each sinner by the Spirit of God. The first parable shall find its full realizing when *all* the saints of God "are presented before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy." The second finds its accomplishment every day wherever and whenever there is a dead soul made alive again to God—born from above, and stamped as an heir of glory. It is not now added by our Lord as in the former, "Joy *shall* be in

heaven over one sinner that repenteth," but, "There *is* joy in the presence of God over one sinner that repenteth." Neither does he say, "More than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance." This special characteristic of the joy seems to be left as its crowning one, when the whole story of fallen and restored humanity shall be made known from first to last, with all its springs and all its consequences. But in the parable before us, there is the present joy expressed when one after another of the family of man is taken out of the kingdom of darkness, and brought into the kingdom of God's dear Son. The seeking and finding by the Spirit of the least and the meanest of these, gives still a deeper and a fuller tone to the notes of joy which swell from the harps of the heavenly hosts. And there is something striking in the very expression used—"*in the presence* of the angels," *before* the angels, as if indicating what must indeed ever be the only source of true joy, either in its commencement or increase among the holy and happy servants of God above. They ever look to their King and Father. He is ever *before* them. They never lose sight of him for a moment. They indeed are gloriously bright, but it is only as they reflect the glory which shines forth from the throne of God, and in the house of the Author of their being. When, therefore, it is said, "joy *in the presence of* the angels," may we not say that it means to point out the joy springing up first in the bosom of the Eternal King, as child after child is restored to him by the Spirit's power, and then breaking forth from him so as to fill all the courts of heaven with a fresh flood of joy, because another jewel is added to the Redeemer's crown. Oh! how thrilling is the thought, as we behold God's work on earth—here and there a lost one found—that the throb of the new life in each one of these has been felt in heaven—that it has taken its place amid the serene joys of the Eternal, and swept through the harps of the angel-hosts as with the breathing of the Almighty, thus bidding them to new joy. "*There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.*"

But while these are the special and prominent points in this parable, let us not pass over what lies scattered over it so distinctly as regards the character of the Spirit's work. Surely we have here exhibited to us "the *love* of the Spirit." He seeks and finds the lost. And this is felt and persevered in, notwithstand-

ing all that might be expected to turn him away from his loving work. From the first man who fell and was brought back, to the last soul that shall be saved, this loving Spirit never ceases his earnest and merciful search. No amount of ignorance, darkness or corruption has stayed his progress. He has been grieved and resisted every day and every hour; and yet he has not tarried in his diligent search. He has left nothing undone that could be done to discover the lost one, to bring him into light, to free him from the pollutions which have gathered around him, and to give him a name and a place in the kingdom of God. Nor must we forget that his love is not merely seen in the seeking until he finds; but when he has found the lost how much has he to bear in the willfulness and unbelief, the waywardness and the folly of the sinner whom he has undertaken to lead back to light, and holiness, and peace! And in view, then, of all this, with what force and power the solemn appeals of the Apostle come sounding in our ears, "Quench not the Spirt." Resist him not, lest even his love may at length be withdrawn. "*Grieve* not the Spirit." Give him no pain or sadness in his great love for you, for it is he who "seals you unto the day of redemption."

But we have now arrived at the last parable of the three. And truly, if it may be allowed to compare one parable with another, or to give the preference to one over the other, where all are equally good and all equally precious as the words of our beloved Master, we might say that this parable excels all others. A German writer has truly said, "If we might venture here to make comparisons, as we do among the sayings of *men*, this parable of the Lord would rightly be called *the crown and pearl of all his parables.*"*

"*And he said, A certain man had two sons: and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine*

* Stier.

did eat: and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough, and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise, and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry."—Luke xv. 11–24.

The latter part of the parable must be reserved for distinct and separate consideration.

It is, perhaps, to be regretted in some respects that this parable has been generally known by the designation of "The *Prodigal* Son." It is very true that this epithet is most just and appropriate. The history before us is truly that of a prodigal son, and the name has probably originated in what is said of him in his land of voluntary exile and sin, that he "wasted his substance in riotous living." Still, admitting the propriety of the epithet, there are reasons which cause regret that it has become so current, to the exclusion of that which the parable itself so emphatically suggests, and which tends to link it so closely with the two preceding ones. That which is represented as the leading subject of all the three is the lost soul of man—guilty, sinful man. The great truths concerning this are taught us, first, by the figure of a "lost sheep," then, by that of a "lost piece of money," and now, by that of a "*lost son.*" "This my son *was lost* and is found." Just, then, as we call the first the parable of the Lost Sheep, so we ought to call the last the parable of the Lost Son. And as we proceed in the examination of this parable, we shall find how important it is to keep this steadily in view.

But before entering consecutively into the several particulars of this parable, it may be well to note in general what it so emphatically adds of important truth to the two which precede,

in the mere selection of the leading part of the illustration. We have in all these—the sheep, the piece of money, and the younger son—the one great lesson taught that man has strayed, has fallen, has departed from God; but each of them gives distinct aspects of this truth; nor can we have a right and just conception of that truth itself unless we make ourselves acquainted with all three.

Thus, as we have seen in the case of the lost sheep, we are told that it went astray. The shepherd lost it. Still it is possible to suppose that it might find its way back to the fold. Nothing in that image prevents us from making such a supposition. The sheep that wanders from the fold may, with like carelessness, wander back again. Now, to correct this mistake, which might possibly arise if the illustration in the first parable remained by itself, we have that in the second given us—a piece of money. Here we see the impossibility of man finding his way back to God by himself, by his own wisdom, or his own power, while, added to this, we have the intimation of man's utter unconsciousness of his sad and miserable condition. The sheep may instinctively feel that it is lost. Man no more feels this than does an inanimate piece of money.

But yet there is something lacking here to complete the picture. Notwithstanding the fullness of truth with which the imagery of the first and the second presents us, if they stood by themselves, they would be deficient in expressing the whole truth as regards this lost soul of man. Thus in the case of the lost sheep, it might be said, Why did not the shepherd take better care of it? Why did he not see that the sheep should not wander? This may have resulted from his carelessness. The very language of the parable might seem to justify such a conclusion: "If *he* lose one of them." So also in the second, the loss seems necessarily to arise from the carelessness of the person who had the ten pieces of silver. Was it not *her* fault that the piece was lost at all? Now, both in the one case and the other, this possible conjecture arises from the very necessity of the figures used; but then, if the thing to be illustrated were represented only by them, might we not be tempted to ask, "Why doth he yet find fault?" and so charge all the ruin and misery of sin upon God, not man.

Now, it is to meet all such conjectures that, as one reason, we

have the parable of The Lost Son. Here there can be no mistake, as in either of the former. The sheep and the money might have been lost by the carelessness of the owners. *He* is lost by his own willful transgression and waywardness of heart. The sheep might have strayed through the neglect of others. He departed willingly, alienated himself from his father and his father's house, because he would not remain, because he would love and choose something better. Thus we see how important generally is the addition here made to the illustrations, in these parables concerning lost man. While, at the same time, it is obvious that if this parable had stood by itself, it would have failed in giving us just those very points of resemblance which are so strkingly and markedly developed in the other two.

Here, then, we have the voluntary exile, the willful rebel, the disobedient, lawless child. Here we have loss, desertion, ruin, misery, and death, but all these brought on and welcomed by the mad folly of man himself. The address of God to the nation of Israel in its apostasy may well describe this the great and terrible apostasy of the whole human race: "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself."

And here, too, we find our Lord drawing nearer, and approaching more closely to the objection urged against him, in order to dispose of it at once and forever. In the two former parables he had spoken not of *receiving* sinners, but of *seeking* and *finding* them. But here he specially refers to *receiving* sinners. He gave the objection its full weight by the former, while he, by his own explanation, guarded himself in each by affirming that it was only the penitent that he meant—but now he will meet the objection fully on its own ground, while he sets forth what that penitence is to which he had so carefully referred.

And just as we have in the first parable the personal work of Christ in redeeming the lost, set forth, and in the second the personal work of the Spirit in coöperating with the Son in this great work, so in the third we have the personal work of the Father, setting the seal of his eternal approval on the work of the Son and of the Spirit, one with them in the restoration of the lost, and one with them in the pure and holy joy at the goodly heritage thus obtained for the kingdom of God forever.

And as in the parable of the lost sheep we have the stupidity

of the wanderer mostly expressed by that figure, so in the parable now before us, there rises up before us at the very outset his great and horrible ingratitude. It is not now a silly sheep that has left the fold and is in danger of death, it is the son of a kind, a loving, and a gracious Father. The wanderer in this parable has left not merely security, and run the risk of ruin and death, but he has left a Father's arms, a Father's house, brought dishonor on a Father's name, slighted a Father's love, and squandered a Father's means. It needed this figure truly to represent in all its malignity and darkness the ingratitude, folly, and wickedness of the willful wanderer from God. It needed this parable fully to illustrate what the relationship between God and man *was*, which the latter lightly esteemed and recklessly broke asunder. It needed this parable by which to show, not only what the others do—the sinner *when* lost—but to trace the path as he goes downward in all its sad and dark colors, and to mark the precious blessings he despised, and the high and glorious position which he forfeited. And as our Lord presents before us in a figure here, that repentance of which he had only spoken in his application of the former parables, it was needful that he should exhibit strongly what it is that, in its whole length and breadth and height and depth, constitutes man's guilt in inward thought and outward act, and of which he must become truly penitent before he can enter into the kingdom of God, or live once more under the protection and in the enjoyment of a Father's loved and happy home.

For the clearer elucidation of this parable, it may be well for us to look at it in three distinct stages of the story as it progresses. 1. The conduct of the lost son, up to the moment of his looking back to his home, with a desire to return. 2. His conduct after this. And, 3. The father's conduct when his son returned.

Now the first of these divisions of the parable gives us, in a very remarkable manner, the history in brief of man's fall and departure from God. No doubt there is meant to be an individual application of this by each sinner to himself. Every sinner, who is taught by the Spirit of God, will be able to identify with himself the description here given of the ungrateful and erring child. Still, it is important to regard the imagery in its

widest signification, as having reference to the departure of man, *the race of man*, from God. "*A certain man had two sons.*" Who the elder of these sons is, remains yet to be seen. In the meantime we have only to do with the second—"*The youngest said unto his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me.*" We are not necessarily to suppose that this request was made by the younger son with any outward mark of disrespect, or in a marked tone of defiance to his father. It would be wrong to regard it as expressive of a rude and insolent manner on the part of this child toward his father. The great feature evidently intended to be set forth here, was the pride and self-sufficiency of this young man in regarding himself as having a *right* to any portion at all of his father's goods—"*the goods which falleth to me:*"—as if these were his as much as they were his father's—that there was something in these things by themselves which made them as much his lawful property as that of his father. And then, together with this, there breaks forth the inner separation of his heart from his father. He may have preferred his request with the greatest reverence. Nay, far from asking petulantly what he desired, as if he were conscious of asking what was wrong, he may have stated his wishes with all outward tokens of respect, as if demanding only what was just and right, but out of the whole of his proceeding there appeared the tokens of a heart already becoming alienated from his parent, because he thought that by having "*the goods* falling to him," made over to himself, he might be partaker of a satisfaction which he never could enjoy, when he merely received the benefit of them, day by day from his Father's hand.

And is not this just the sad story of Eden brought home to us under the simple guise of an earthly parent and his child? Adam and Eve did not, in the fatal sin which brought ruin and death into the world, at once openly and shamelessly fly in the face of God. They did not approach their Heavenly Father with irreverence or any outward expression of even diminished love. On the contrary, the course of the temptation proves that they only sinned because they vainly expected by so doing not to separate themselves from God, but to make themselves more like God—the very sin of this younger son. They were deceived by their own hearts and by Satan into the belief that they had a right to

take of this tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They determined to be no longer in the position of just receiving each day in Eden what the love and bounty of the Father would bestow, but to "put forth" their hand and take something of their own, and so far act independently of God. The younger son's wicked ambition was to hold the goods he coveted as his father held them. Our first parents' godless ambition was to do the same—in other words, to be "as gods, knowing good and evil." And thus, too, they betrayed in all this how their hearts were already being separated from God—already the process of alienation had begun—the wandering had commenced. They would themselves have started with horror if charged with it at the moment, but, nevertheless, they were losing their love to God. They vainly and impiously conceived that they could enjoy more satisfaction in that which was not directly conveyed to them from God than from what was; and that a more sparkling cup of pleasure would be theirs which they themselves presented to their lips, than any which a father's gentle kindness could give them to drink.

But we must notice that the expression in the parable is one of those remarkable links which bind the parables together, and give to all in this connection a deeper and more solemn meaning than either of them separately can have. The words of the lost son here—"*Give me the portion of goods which falleth to me*"—exactly accord with those of the rich fool in the parable already considered, when he speaks of "*my* fruits," "*my* barns," "*my* goods." "Soul, *thou* hast much goods laid up for many years;" and thus he, as this younger son, was guilty of the wicked folly of seeking to "lay up treasure *for himself*." Then, too, these words of the prodigal remind us of what Satan's work is, as described in another parable. That which this younger son calls "the portion of goods falling *unto me*," which the rich fool equally considered as his own—Satan says likewise that it is his. "He keepeth his palace, (the human heart,) and *his goods* are in peace." And then we have still further, in one of the most solemn and awful of the parables uttered by our Lord, a single, but, in connection with the above, a most emphatic glance at the same thing, where Abraham replies to the deep wail of anguish proceeding from the tortured soul amid the flames which surrounded him when he "went to

his own place," "Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst *thy good* things." Man thought he could obtain and keep a "portion of goods" apart from God—he vainly and foolishly calls them his own. Satan is the only real, substantial possessor in this matter; and when the poor, deluded, guilty soul falls into the depths of eternal ruin, it has the unutterable misery of looking back to its brief space of life here, with the nominal possession of things it coveted after, but which have passed away forever. It has bartered its peace and the love of God for a moment's foolish and guilty intoxication. It has sold its birthright for "a mess of pottage."

When the younger son made his request to his father, we are told that the latter "*divided unto them his living.*" In the story there is implied the patient, gentle, long-suffering of this father. The father's heart told him what "a heritage of woe" his son was taking, when he so longed to be "Lord of himself." He did not refuse him his request, because he would not retain him against his will, when his heart was wavering in its allegiance, but gave him what he sought. And thus, when our first parents sought to be independent of God, and so began that long and evil course of divided hearts and disobedient wills, God gave them what they sought. He allowed them to experience what evil is, as they had already experienced what good is. He, as it were, put into *their* hands, at *their* disposal, things which, as originally from him, were good, that they might do with them according to the vain and godless desires of their own hearts, and eat of the fruit of their own devices. He did not utterly cast them off, no more than the father in the parable utterly cast off his son. He suffered him to enter on the bitter course of experience he had chosen; but neither in the one case nor in the other was the return of the wanderer declared to be impossible. And, even as we may suppose, it was with tears in his eyes, as with sad compassion in his heart, that the father in the parable gave his son what he burned to possess; so, also, when our Heavenly Father allowed our first parents to take what they coveted after, while he distinctly warned them of the fatal character of the possession, he graciously spanned the dark cloud of sin, separation, and death with the bright bow of promise betokening a better day yet to come, when one like unto this younger son should roll away the

darkness of sin and restore the wanderer once more to his arms, and bring sunshine again into the room in his father's house, which his departure had left empty and desolate.

Such was the first step which man took in departing from the living God. See how naturally the next followed upon it. "*Not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.*" These words bear out what has been stated above, as to the design in this parable, to show that the first act of the son was not performed in an openly insulting and offensive manner to his father. On the contrary, the story evidently implies that he merely desired to call *his own* what in reality belonged to his father, but that in doing so he had no wish to remove himself from his father altogether. After he had received his portion he still lingered at his father's house; and it was "*not many days after*" that he departed. This forcibly illustrates the gradual descent in the guilty path of fallen man. Our first parents little dreamed of leaving Eden when they first transgressed. They little dreamed of wishing to be far away from the God who made them, and had given them all things richly to enjoy; but their offspring, the great family which has succeeded to them, "begotten after their likeness, in their image," wandered as they had not thought of doing. The evil disease in their nature was working and bringing forth its terrible and fatal results; and so man, not satisfied with merely seeking his own apart from God, began to shun his presence altogether, and at length became so completely alienated from him as to forget, or wish to forget, that such a being ever existed, and thus, as it were, "*gathered all together*"—gathered in blind unbelief and reckless ingratitude, all he could lay his hands upon, "*and took his journey into a far country,*" at as great a distance from God as possible. We can not but observe how true to the life this picture of the history of fallen man is. First, separation of heart from God, the entire forgetfulness of God—"God not in all his thoughts"—until "the fool says in his heart, There is no God."

Then comes the next step, "*and there wasted his substance in riotous living.*" These words do not refer to one species of immorality or ungodliness rather than to another. They do not mean one fleshly lust more than any other. They include the whole of those

things to which sinful, fallen man, has become addicted by his transgression against God and his willful banishment of himself from his Father's rule, protection, favor, and love. They mean total profligacy of character. The lust of the eye, and the lust of the flesh—the depraved, wretched, and degrading passions of corrupt and corrupting human nature—that festering mass which can yield nothing else than the fatal and disgusting miasma of a moral pestilence. In these things man has "*wasted his substance*," —what he coveted after—what he never rested till he obtained—that is, something to spend of his own accord, without his father overlooking him. All this is *wasted*. The things of his father, so good in themselves, are all thrown away, or rather, they are so abused and perverted, that they have become evil in the hands of the sinner; and, instead of being a means of blessing, only minister to his decay and death. How these words of inspiration in the real history of the prodigal son, of which the story in the parable is but a faint image and resemblance, give us at a glance the whole truth in its terrible and deadly guilt of man's departing from God, and "wasting his substance in riotous living!"—"And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that *every imagination of the thoughts* of his *heart* was only evil continually." "And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for *all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth*."

Again, we proceed another step in this story. "*And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want*." There is unquestionably an important transition here in the parable to something still worse than what has gone before. Some evil of a new character seems to be intimated. The poor profligate spends *all* he had. Just as he discovers the extent of his extravagance, and finds out how utterly destitute he has become by his own fault and imprudence, a terrible and grievous famine in the land he had chosen to dwell in meets him, and he begins to feel the dreadful effects of pinching famine. "*He begins to be in want*." Now, let us remember, that in the thing illustrated here, while we have to regard the outwardly godless and profligate course of fallen man, a prey to his sinful and corrupt passions, we must not overlook the master evil within his heart which, through the whole of his rebellious conduct, is showing itself in such fearful declension from God and holiness. What,

then, of man's inner feeling in his downward course, is set forth by these words of the parable, "*When he had spent all, he began to be in want?*" Obviously this man plunged himself into the corruption which his guilty nature loved. He rushed into every excess which that nature desired. He took every thing it could give him apart from God. He drained the cup to the very dregs. He *spent all.* He was not merely a spendthrift, he was a bankrupt. He abused the things he called his own so terribly, that he himself began to find that they were being utterly wasted and gone. "*He began to be in want.*" He felt that the independence which he had so coveted was, after all, a fatal gift; he began to be in want of some one whom he could apply to—on whom he could depend—who could protect him, feed him, and give him his good things still. His solitary independence amid his corruption, was nothing else than feeling the pinchings of want in the midst of a famine. He must seek some help out of this. He is persuaded that he can not any longer sustain himself—that there is in his very nature the necessity of dependence—and so he looks about for the supply of this need.

What that is in the history of man, will become apparent as we go on with the story in the parable. "*And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.*" This is the history of fallen man deliberately seeking out and yielding himself to his new master. He went away from God, and chose a distant land, in the vain hope that there he would be as a god. Now, he must learn that he is only a slave. He does not turn again to his duty. He does not retrace the steps of his broken allegiance to God! No! He can live no longer without depending on some one stronger and mightier than he; but his eye is not toward home, or his father. He has no thought of leaving the land in which he is. He does not dream of that. His wishes and his expectations begin and end *there;* and so in the language of the parable, he "*went and joined himself to a citizen of that country.*" "That citizen," says Bernard, "I can not understand as other than one of the malignant spirits, who in that they sin with an irremediable obstinacy, and have passed into a permanent disposition of malice and wickedness, are no longer guests and strangers, but citizens and abiders in the land of sin." This is, doubtless, the just view of this part of the parable. The

prodigal joining himself to the citizen of the country, is fallen man giving himself to—"fastening," or "pinning himself" upon the evil and corrupt dweller in the land of sin—on him whose abode it is not only now, but forever—who, with his legion of fallen and corrupt angels, knows well how to lord it over the poor wandering souls of men in that dark and deadly land.

And surely, then, this points us to that feature in the history of fallen man wherein, after exhausting, as it were, every thing of evil passion in himself, of daring neglect of God, and determined disobedience, he turned himself to the still further guilt and disobedience of *idolatry*. Instead of turning again to the one living and true God from whom he had strayed, he made unto himself "gods many and lords many." He did indeed seek to conceal from himself what the actual character of this special step in his guilty progress was. He professed it to be a seeking of God, a worshiping of the Creator, a depending on Jehovah. But the real truth of his pretended worship of God was just this—he "sacrificed to devils, not to God." He really and truly transferred his allegiance to the great adversary who had deceived, and tempted, and seduced Adam in Paradise. He made him gods of wood and stone, of gold, of silver, or of brass; or he worshiped the host of heaven according to his own whim, or caprice, or fancy—his deceived heart leading him astray further and further, and giving triumph to spirits of darkness, inasmuch as by his every act he has now, to all intents and purposes, the worshiper of the "god of this world"—"*the citizen of that country.*"

Pass away for a moment from the parable and its meaning, and look at the living picture as traced by the finger of inspiration. "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful: but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like unto corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves: who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshiped and served the creature more (rather) than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen."—Romans i. 21–25.

In the part of the parable, then, at which we have arrived, we have the representation of man at a further stage in his downward progress than when corrupting himself. He has become an idolater. He has installed Satan in the place of God, and, as far as he can do it, has placed in the hands of the spirits of darkness the control of the course of this world. See, then, how the god of this world treats his victim. "*He went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and* HE *sent him into his fields to feed swine.*" When Satan gets the mastery, it is not to elevate, but to degrade his victim—it is not to add luster, but to bring total darkness to the soul—it is not to restore health, but to increase moral and spiritual corruption, even to the horrors of eternal death. And thus, just as "*the citizen*" in the parable contemptuously gives the wretched prodigal the very meanest and lowest occupation, so Satan, when once he has his slave in fetters, when once he has his victim in his toils, drives him at once to the depths of degradation and shame. He feels secure in his possession, and with malignant and triumphant contempt he plunges the poor lost one deeper and deeper still into the mire of sin. "*And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat, and no man gave unto him.*" Our version here hardly gives the full import of the original. Lazarus, we are told, "*desired* to eat of the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table," and we understand by that that he did eat of them. And so here the prodigal desired to eat of these husks, and did eat thereof. For "no man gave unto him." No man gave him any thing else. This fare of the beasts had become essential to keep him in life. He eagerly snatched at it as he best could; for none, neither the cruel task-master nor his tyrannical servants gave him any thing else. And this truly illustrates the sad history of fallen man. His idolatry, his worshiping of devils under every varied and fantastic form that his own wicked and depraved imagination could suggest, just plunged him deeper and deeper in the mire and filth of mere carnality. Look at this as exhibited in one of its most frightful aspects in the history of Rome under the emperors. There we see, amid the boasted refinements of that age, man, as a moral and responsible being, sunk to a level, yea, beneath the level of the beasts that perish. What a history of swinish lust and passion is much of that which presents itself to the eye, and

makes the heart ache in that period. "All the monstrous luxuries and frantic wickednesses which we read of in later Roman history, at the close of the world's Pagan epoch, stand there like the last despairing effort of man to fill his belly with the husks." "In this light we may behold the incredibly sumptuous feasts—the golden palaces, the enormous shows and spectacles, and all the pomp and pride of life carried to the uttermost—the sins of nature, and the sins below nature; while yet from amid all this the voice of man's misery only made itself the louder heard. The experiment carried out on this largest scale only caused the failure to be more signal—only proved the more plainly that of the food of beasts there could not be made the nourishment of man."

And if from the boasted and so-called refinement of imperial Rome we turn to the rude and savage barbarians to be found amid the burning sands of Africa, or amid the vast prairies of America—if we look at the bushmen of Australia or of Africa, there, too, we find the same type of utter moral degradation as in the above. Sunk they are, lower than the very beasts which perish, in both the one case and in the other, with only this difference, that the moral degradation, the swinish nature, is tricked out in the one in the fantastic garb of man's pride and folly, and in the other it lies exposed in its native nakedness; and if we set the "one over against the other," we shall hardly say that man's utter depravity and carnal slough is the least disgusting, when arrayed in the motley of the fool, and bedizened with the gilt and spangles of the stage.

The following are weighty remarks on the whole of this dark and gloomy picture, so far as we have hitherto traced it. "He who would not, as a son, be treated liberally by his father, is compelled to be the servant and the bond-slave of a foreign master. He who would not be ruled by God is compelled to serve the devil. He who would not abide in his father's royal palace is sent to the field among hinds. He who would not dwell among brethren and princes is obliged to be the servant and companion of brutes. He who would not feed on the bread of angels, petitions in his hunger for the husks of the swine."*

And here we have reached the second division of this part of

* Corn. a Lapide [Trench.]

the parable which we proposed. We have followed this lost son in his willful and wicked departure from his father, his home, and his country, up to this point, when it is said, "*He came to himself.*" We have now, then, to follow his course from that time to his once more presenting himself before the father whom he had left.

And here it is necessary to interpose a remark which ought not to be forgotten, if we would enter fully into the meaning of this parable. In the history of the younger son demanding his portion of goods, leaving his father's house, plunging himself into godless dissipation, joining himself to the citizen of the foreign land, and degraded to be a swine-herd, and to eat swine's food, we must regard him as giving us a picture of man generally—the *race* of man, fallen and departed from God. We can have no just and proper conceptions of what the departure from God's house of a child hitherto loved, protected, and well provided for must be, if we confine our attention to individual cases. We must take the whole course of the history generally. We must trace its commencement in Eden, and mark its fearful though necessary and legitimate results in all the unnatural crimes, the bloody deeds, the unutterable horrors referred to in the first chapter of Romans, and staining the history of man with the deepest and darkest colors. True, each individual who has thus wandered, if left to himself, would exhibit in his own personal history all these terrible features, and that infallibly, for the bitter fountain could only send forth bitter waters. Moreover, if God had not devised a plan of mercy for wandering man, and in virtue of this had not put the restraints of his providence and his grace upon him, each one of the race, from Adam downward, would have betrayed an exact and fearful resemblance in every point to the course of this prodigal. In his career, every one who has eyes to see, or ears to hear, may perceive what he might have been, and inevitably would become, unless restrained by the grace of God, who still has an offer of mercy and peace in store for him, and willeth not the death of a sinner, but is resolved to open a door of hope for him, and at least invite him to flee from the wrath to come.—(Appendix D.)

And thus we see that it is absolutely necessary for us to regard the downward course of the prodigal as representing to us not

the actual personal history of this or that individual of the human race, but their history in the mass—the development and bringing to light of that evil thing of which they all partake, and which, in their common history, has blossomed and brought forth such fearful works of darkness as we have seen.

But now, in the second division of this part of the parable, namely, the return of the prodigal to his father's house, we must no longer regard it as having this general reference to the race, because it is not true that the whole race returns to God, nor is it necessary to regard it as giving the general history even of those who do return, but of each individual, and for this simple reason, that *each* must undergo the steps in this history himself. He may have been restrained by the grace of God from experiencing much in the history of the prodigal hitherto, which yet truly depicted his fallen nature; but he *must* now experience what this prodigal experienced when he is restored again to his father's house. The true history of the fall—its guilt and its terrible consequences, can only be read off from the aggregate histories of the children of this fallen race. The true history of paradise regained may be read off from the single personal history of each one of the children newly adopted into God's family. The consequences of the former spread over a race, and infected each and all together. In the latter, every thing that is required for the whole family is needed for one. The Cross of Christ, his Spirit, a changed heart, a renewed mind, justification, sanctification, all these are not merely the general features of the family, they are the particular and personal features of each; and not as in the former so in the latter, for by natural descent all the horrors of the former are propagated and extended, but in the latter each stands by himself, that is, it is not *his* return, *his* new birth, *his* change, *his* salvation, which propagates and extends the salvation, and change of other dead souls, such as he himself once was.

When, therefore, we follow the prodigal on his return, we leave, from the very necessity of the case, the general view of the human race in the things illustrated, and compare the story of this repentant son with the history of each one of those saved ones for whom the Good Shepherd gave his life, and who, by his mighty power, are at length safely housed in his heavenly fold.

Let us now, then, proceed with the parable. "*And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough, and to spare, and I perish with hunger!*" How significant and beautiful is the language! "*he came to himself.*" He had been up to this time "beside himself"—he had been a fool and a madman, spurning away his own mercies, and making shipwreck of his own happiness—he had mistaken himself altogether—he had fancied that his happiness would be all the greater, first as independent of his father, then, as away from under his eye, not to say control, then in a strange land, then in riotous living, then in foreign service. And now he finds out how bitterly he is mistaken—how miserably he has deceived himself—what a madman's part he has acted. *He came to himself.* He awakes out of a dream—the vail is rent asunder, and he now sees himself in his true colors. Then mark the exceeding simplicity and beauty of the story. Immediately that this mist clears away from his mind, and he becomes sensible of what he is himself, what kind of man he is, so different from what he had thought in the day of his pride and rebellion—his heart turns to his father's house—the very same moment finds him with self-consciousness of his folly and guilt, and a wondrous change in his impressions of home—that home, where in his former state he had proudly and wickedly sought even more than a son's due. Now he thinks of it as compared with his own condition, and the very servant, the "doorkeeper," call forth the longings of his heart, that he might be even as they. And then comes his resolution, given in words which, as long as language can be uttered and understood, will send a thrill into the heart of him who hears them:—"*I will arise, and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.*"

Notice this in the above language. In the story in the parable, we must simply consider the erring child going back to an *earthly* parent. Well, then, mark how deeply he had been taught as to the nature of his sinful conduct. He does not think it enough to go back and acknowledge his ingratitude to his parent, and so seek by that acknowledgment to gain his pardon. He feels the whole magnitude of his sinful career—"*I have sinned* AGAINST HEAVEN," as well as "*and before thee.*" His heart began to tell

him what an evil thing and a bitter he had been doing. Sin is no longer what it was before. It is now before him in its true colors, as an offence against Heaven, as that which brings him who commits it into direct antagonism and collision with all that is holy, just, pure, and good. His language is just as David's, "Against *thee, thee only,* have I sinned and done evil in thy sight." He did not feel the direct offence against his father less. Far from it. But he put it in its right place. The "iniquity of his sin," was first, in that it was "*against Heaven*," and next, "*before thee.*"

And now, in turning to that which is illustrated, we may remark, in passing, how the selection of the special imagery of this parable is seen at this point also to be absolutely necessary for a full exhibition of the great truth which is the subject of all the three parables in this chapter. We have already seen that it was needful to give a just view of human nature *as lost.* The sheep might have wandered, the money might have been dropped through the carelessness of others. As far as these two parables go, they are both defective in one point. That one point is supplied by the present parable. It tells us, as we have seen at large, that man departed *willingly* from God; that he has been lost in consequence of his own willful act; that his "sin (the blame of it) lies at his own door." And so also in that part of the parable which we have reached, nothing more is needed to complete the view given by the others regarding the finding of the lost than this. If the other two parables had been all the illustration given, we might have said that the salvation of the lost was a work with which the sinner had as little to do, in any volition of his own, as if he were borne, like the strayed one, on the shepherd's shoulders to the fold, or as a coin lifted up by the woman when discovered lying in some obscure corner of the house. And thus these two parables, taken by themselves, would seem to leave man merely a slave still. In his wanderings he willingly made himself a slave to Satan. In his return, he would appear to be made, *irrespective of his will,* a servant of God. The parable before us supplies us with what is lacking here. It shows us in the strongest and most forcible manner, that the sinner is not saved contrary to his will, but that when he is saved it is with his will; that he is not forced back whether

he will or no, but that he is gently carried back when he entreats and implores to be restored. The shepherd's arm is mighty to secure his return. The Spirit's light will find him out in the darkest corner. And he himself will cry out, "*I will arise, and go to my father.*" These three things must concur in each converted soul, in each restored, saved, and sanctified child of Adam, for we must not neglect to notice the importance of the other two, in the testimony which this, by itself, can not furnish. Here we have the soul "*made willing*," but it is in the day of *God's power* —the power of Christ in furnishing the salvation needed, and the power of the Spirit in applying that provided salvation.

And here, then, we have the full and glorious picture of that which our Lord only mentioned in his application of the former parables, but which, from the nature of the imagery there employed, could not enter directly into those parables themselves. Here is the parabolic image fully, truly given, just on such a tablet as may illustrate every line in the feature and every shadow and color in the picture, of "*the one sinner that repenteth.*" This is true repentance. This is godly sorrow. This is the turning of the heart back again to God. This is the change of mind which must mark each and every one of those who are admitted into the presence of God at last, as dwellers in his kingdom, and as furnishing unutterable joy to himself, and to all his holy and happy servants.

The sinner who will at length be found in heaven—owned by Christ, received by God, and all glorious in spiritual light, has the very turning-point of his history marked by this—"*He came to himself.*" When the Shepherd met him, and stood face to face with his poor lost one—when the ray of light from the Spirit fell upon him in his darkness and death—then "*he came to himself*," he awoke out of sleep—out of the sleep of death. Like the poor man in the Gospel, "once blind," he now "sees." "He has passed from death unto life." The Spirit has moved upon his heart—and the inner discovery has been made that up to that moment, to that point, darkness alone had covered it, and the present experience of it is, that even now, when light has sprung up, it is "without form and void." A mighty expanse lies before the awakened sinner, of depraved affection, perverted thoughts, guilty inclinations, godless habits—all these spreading

their evil influence on the amazed and perplexed soul. Look at that Philippian jailer as *he* "*comes to himself*," and begins to cry, "Lord, what must I do to be saved!" and you have the original of the parabolic painting in this part.

And then see how, with the knowledge of self, there comes into the awakened soul holy thoughts and longings after God. O that I knew him! O that I could be his! O that I might dwell under the shadow of his wing, in the secret place of the Most High! O that I might be admitted into his presence—to behold his face in peace—to have him near me otherwise than in anger—to dwell, at least, so dependent on him that I might have even the crumbs from his table. Yea, "I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness."

And then all this follows upon the keen perception of the worthlessness of all else to supply the cravings of the soul. What are the former things now? The husks are understood now, by bitter experience, to be no true nourishment in the mighty famine which the soul is experiencing. As far as they are concerned the soul feels, "*I perish with hunger.*" All these things which "*were* gain" at one time, are now "*counted loss*;" yea, reckoned as the vilest and most worthless refuse. And so the poor striken one pours forth the earnest purpose formed within: "*I will arise, and go to my father.*" Already the spirit of adoption is given. Already he can say, "*my* Father." He is now in the right direction. "Turn thou me, and I shall be turned," is what has taken place within him, and he has already commenced in reality to retrace his steps.

What a difference between the opening language in this parable uttered by this son, and that uttered now! The former, full of pride, hardness of heart, stubbornness, and rebellion. The latter breathing humility out of a softened spirit and from a gentle loving heart. Is this the same person? Can this be the same being? Yea, it is true—"*He was dead and is alive again.*" And all that can be conceived as distinguishing a state of life from a state of death, is but a faint image of the great and wondrous change which he has undergone, when he lifts up his eyes to heaven, and cries out of the depth of his sin, as it has found him out, "*I will arise, and go to my father, and will say unto him,*

Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son."

But the prodigal was not satisfied with a resolution. He lost no time in carrying it out. "*He arose and came to his father.*" And so, too, the sinner, when once the light has burst in upon his soul, and he has been taught what he is. As soon as God "reveals Christ in him," he tarries not with the mere wish or desire for deliverance. He does not linger in the mire of his degradation, with this new-born hope and feeling within him. This he can not do. The new birth of his soul is an all-powerful thing he has derived from God. It is a new creation which exerts its own energy, and supplies the mightiest impulse. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit," and this will not abide in fleshly things. It is within him "a well of water *springing up*," rising up, pouring forth its living stream, and so he can not rest until he breathe out, at his father's feet, what has thus been created in his soul. When the poor guilty child of Adam has been enlightened by the Spirit and sees its shame, and descries, though yet afar off, the house and home of its heavenly parent, and contrasts the light there with its own darkness—the order there with its own confusion—the plenty there with its own want—the comfort there with its own misery;—when the vail drops from the mind, and the curtain rises which has hitherto screened "the things unseen and eternal," and when all this presses on the aching heart in the power and force of a true spiritual change, bringing him to his knees, as he never was before—making him speak the word, "*Father*," as he never spoke it before—causing him to bow down as Saul of Tarsus did in Damascus, after Christ had met him in the way, *then* we have what the parable means by these simple words, "*He arose, and came to his Father.*"

And now we are to trace his course, when this penitent child arose and came to his father. But what of the father himself? "*When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck, and kissed him.*" All his child's ingratitude had not quenched that father's love. The past was forgotten, and he only saw his poor child laboring and toiling in his weary way, clad in the wretched soiled garments of his poverty, the famine mark in his face, and that face now turned again

to his own home. This was enough for him. His full heart overflowed towards the weary wanderer. "*When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him.*" Had he received some tidings from the far country of his son's misery, and how he had begun to exhibit a desire to return home? Was the father then eagerly watching the direction in which he knew his son would return home? Was he then waiting with all a father's heart to be gracious to his erring child? Possibly the parable indicates this. When, however, he did see his son yet a great way off, "*he had compassion.*" He had grieved over his lost one. The pity with which he regarded him, as he set forth, is doubled now, when he sees him returning. He knew well what would surely happen to his child as he saw him go; but now he beholds him in the depth of his trouble, weariness, faintness, and misery, and his compassion arises with double tenderness in his heart. "*He ran*" to meet him. How exquisite is this touch of simple story in the parable! Think of the prodigal. The last few steps will not only be when he is wearied with his journey, but just as he approaches his home, misgivings may arise. "Will my father receive me? Even as a hired servant, will he admit me? What if I be turned away after all from his door? It is what I may justly expect, for it is what I merit, but if it be so, my heart will break, and I must lie down and die." His loving, pitying father spared him this. While yet a great way off, his father ran to meet him—was beforehand with him—or ever he was aware, had prevented these thickly-gathering thoughts from pressing still more deeply on his heart, and without a word, but in the tenderness of that silent love, which is often more eloquent than language, he "*fell on his neck, and kissed him.*"

And such, then, in its highest sense, is the conduct of our heavenly Father when the penitent soul bows down in the new-born spirit of adoption, and dares to look up and ask itself, "Is there hope for me?" When all its sin becomes more manifest as it draws nearer and nearer to him from whom it has wandered—when it is almost ready to sink down in despair, and feels as if the hope could scarce ever be realized, of a happy restoration to its home, *then* does the tenderness of God our Father appear. Then "his heart is turned within him, his repentings are kindled together." *He* has seen and watched all his child's weary and

sad thoughts. He has followed him every step of his spiritual journey of anxiety, doubt, fear, and kindling hope; and just at the time when the poor heart needs it most, He meets his penitent child. The Saviour's words become sweetly realized in that child's experience—"The Father himself loveth you;" and the heart-searching of him who is now with his face turned Zionward, is calmed down by these gentle words of reconciliation: "I, even I, am he that blotteth out your transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember your sins."

But see what the prodigal does. This gracious, loving reception by his Father—so unexpected, so undeserved—does not change his mind from its new and blessed condition of repentance. This abounding goodness of his parent does not quench his purpose of sin-confession. No! Even with such love as is shown to him—even with his father's arms around him, and the soft kiss of love and forgiveness on his cheek, he breaks forth into his heartfelt acknowledgment of his sin—"*Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.*"

And thus it is with the penitent sinner. The exceeding great love of his heavenly Father to him, in bowing down from heaven as it were, to meet him—in making him feel, that on his knees and in prayer, he has found one close by that he had but a moment before thought "a great way off,"—this exceeding great love, condescension, and forgiveness, just opens his heart still more as it unseals his lips to cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner." That confession which he longs to make—without making which he knows there can be no hope of relief to his soul, but which fear might have frozen on his lips, and sent him fainting and wretched away, is made to gush out in warm streams of lively sorrow by the near and gentle embrace of his reconciled Father. It is the very conviction of that Father's inextinguishable love, the very consciousness that, notwithstanding all he has done, that Father is waiting to be gracious, exalted to have mercy, and willing to fold to his heart his hitherto rebellious child—it is this which at once brings the confession freely forth to be poured into the ear not of man but of God, in the close personal embrace of sorrow on his heart, and forgiveness on the part of his Father.

And yet there is one part of what the prodigal meant to say to his father which is left out. He did *not* say, "*Make me as one of thy hired servants.*" And this does in a very precious manner touch upon the inner experience of the penitent sinner in the hour when he has been met by his father and embraced by him, and welcomed home again. The fullness and freeness of his father's love make him all the more disposed to pour out the confession of his sin; but that very free and full love forbids him regarding it as less than what the father means. His father's conduct to him, is that of forgiveness to his child. All the precious words which the Gospel whispers to the penitent, and which the awakened spirit so fondly drinks in, in the day of his being reconciled to God, are his own, as one of the children of God, and an heir of his kingdom. And thus he never thinks of pleading otherwise now than as a son. His humility is true, and so he bows down his heart in sorrow for his sin and weeps his bitter tears. His humility would be false, if with all that his father shows himself to be, by so many infallible proofs, he should shrink from the condition and relationship of a child.

And how did the father answer this self-reproach on the part of his penitent child? "*He said unto his servants Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.*" The father does not check his son's expression of sorrow: he receives it into his parental bosom. He does not forbid the tear: he wipes it away. He does not deny the misery and wretchedness of his wandering: he takes away that misery from him. He must go home. He must come in. His room is ready. But he must enter as his father's child—not as a forlorn, weary, forsaken outcast; and so he calls to his servants to bring out a robe, the best one; nor will he forget even a ring, to put for a special ornament on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and thus arrayed, he takes him in rejoicing, and bids the feast be prepared which shall mark outwardly *his* joy because of his son's return, and unite his household with him in the expression of this joy too. His son had poured his sorrowing confession into his father's ear, and that was a sacred thing between them both. But his father proclaims, as it were, upon the house-top, that

which after all was the mainspring and cause of joy and festivity —"*This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.*"

What a wonderful picture does the parable here give us of God's dealing with his penitent children! We can not but see in the "best robe" of the parable—or the "*first* robe," *i. e.*, not the robe which the son wore before, for he gathered all he then had together, and took them away with him, but the *first* as the *best*—we can not but recognize in this robe the righteousness of Christ which is "of God by faith," "unto all, and upon all them that believe." The vision which Zechariah saw throws reflected light on this parable. Joshua is seen standing in filthy garments before the angel; and the Lord Jehovah commands that his filthy garments be taken away from him; and "he said unto him, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment." The iniquity passing away from the soul is its "change of raiment;" and this change of raiment is the best robe—the righteousness of Christ. And hence the blessedness of the man "whose transgression is for given, and whose sin is covered."

And here we see how needful the imagery of this parable is to fill up what is lacking in that of the lost sheep. When the shepherd brings back the sheep to the fold, all the change there is from its condition of being lost, to its condition of safety. That parable could give no more. It expressly marks the *power* of Christ in delivering the lost soul. But this parable shows that a change must come over the lost before he be admitted again to his Father's house. The sinner has lost his own righteousness. *That* robe has passed away forever. He is now "clothed with filthy rags." But this is no seemly raiment for his Father's house. No amount of love or tenderness on the part of God can ever make it right to introduce his child thus clad into his home. And so he covers him with righteousness *not* his own—that is, not of his own providing—a righteousness which his great and good Shepherd has purchased for him by the price of his own most precious death, and which he has risen again from the dead in order that it may be applied to the sinner's soul, making him to be "freely justified from all things by the redemption which is in Christ Jesus."

This, then, is the robe wherewith the Father covers his penitent child whom he receives. It is the *best* robe. There is none like it in the courts of heaven. The light and unutterable splendor of the archangel's apparel is obscured before the glory of this. Like the morning star which is lost in the flood of light when the sun rises, so all other things in heaven merge in the everlasting glory and brightness of this *best* robe. And then mark, it is not given because of the child's penitence. It is the free gift of the Father's mercy. It is not even asked for first by the child. It is offered and bestowed of free and sovereign grace. Nevertheless, it is given only to the penitent. It was not sent to be worn in the far country among the citizens and the swine-herds of the world. It is bestowed on the lowly, humbled, sorrowing, home-seeking child, and on him *alone*. Penitence never gained or can gain this robe—but it never is wanting to the penitent; that as he goes back to his Father's house, whatever be the shame and sorrow for sin which wells up within his own stricken bosom, no shame or sorrow shall ever by his entrance mar the beauty or darken the light of that glorious dwelling. Christ by his mighty power bears his lost one through the dangers, and from the foes which surround him. In the covenant of peace between him and the Father he lays down his life, and so places in the hand of that Father the glorious robe of finished righteousness with which the Father may clothe his recovered child as he enters once more into his family.

Then there is "*the ring on his hand.*" The penitent is not only to receive such clothing as shall not dishonor his Father's house, and which shall distinguish him as his child, but he must have an ornament on his hand, distinguishing him in dignity and honor. This seems clearly to mark the Spirit's work. If it be merely as an outward token of honor, such as the conferring of a ring sometimes was, then it marks those spiritual graces which are the true ornaments of the penitent and forgiven soul; or if it be in reference to the habit of sealing important documents with a ring, and so be intended to signify the high confidence reposed in the party so honored, it will refer to the promise that the ransomed people of God shall become kings and priests unto God; or, it may be, that by the mere act of placing the ring on the hand is meant what is spoken of in the Epistle to the Ephesians

of the "sealing" of believers by "the Spirit of promise unto the day of redemption."

Then there are "*shoes for his feet.*" What kind of sandal the Gospel sandal is, Paul has told us in his Epistle to the Ephesians, "Having your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;" and the mention of shoes here seems very strikingly to indicate this truth, that hitherto the soul has only wearied itself in its wilderness wanderings. Like the poor prodigal, who, before he was met by his father, would have his bare feet wounded and cut with the road he traveled, so the soul has found the way in which he walked hard, and rough, and bitterly painful. But, when reconciled to the Father, its walk henceforth is in peace. It is, as it were, shod with the gospel of peace. Formerly it walked without God, and no wonder if that walk was sorrow, pain, and misery. Now "it walks up and down in the Lord," and no wonder that it finds the change so blessed; or, to vary the metaphor, the soul which was broken down and overwhelmed under its own burden, when it takes Christ's burden instead, finds that to be "easy and light."

Then the feast and the joy spoken of in this parable are just what our Lord explains of the former ones: "*Joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth.*"

And now, we may observe how the objection raised against our Lord's conduct, and which drew forth these three parables, has been fully and finally met. Met, not on the ground of the private feelings of those who made it, whatever these might be, but on the simple merits of that objection itself. Was it right or not—was it holy or not—was it becoming or not for Christ to receive sinners and eat with them? He has taught us that he not only receives sinners, but seeks them out, and that, too, first by his own personal toil and suffering, and then by the diligent seeking and finding of the Holy Ghost; and then he tells us, as if to mark the truth in the strongest terms which he was explaining, and the explanation of which could alone fairly meet the objection, that heaven itself rings again with joy, when such seeking and saving of lost sinners take place. Then he passes on, and exhibits God the Father receiving the sinner, and taking him home, and making a feast in consequence, and giving him not merely a welcome, but one marked by gifts of special grace

and kingly favor. And is all this, then, wrong? Is it inconsistent with the character of God, derogatory to his honor, contrary to his laws, and tending to confound sin and holiness, good and evil together, under the actings of mere pity and compassion? Nay; this is not done as saving *in* sin, but saving *from* sin. God has not forgotten what is due to himself, to his honor and glory, in this seeking, finding, and receiving of the sinner—for see how that sinner comes! Heart-broken, sad, sorrowing, humbled, penitent. He comes not to hold fellowship with God as a sinner, but he comes to God to be delivered from his sin forever. He is weary of it, he abhors it, he loathes it, he longs to be rid of it. And so, as far as the changed condition of the poor sinner's heart is concerned, the edge of the objection is turned when Christ was condemned as receiving him. But besides this, he shows us in this parable how God not only has respect to the inner condition of that son which he graciously and lovingly receives, but also how he has respect to his own honor and glory, seeing he will not take him to his house otherwise than clad in the best robe, with a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. What man lost by his folly he can never regain. But God has magnified his law, and made it honorable, by providing a free gift for man, at the cost and by the sacrifice of his dear Son, so that the iniquity is canceled and blotted out, not at the expense of justice, but of the voluntary sufferer; and the reception of the sinner is marked, not by his trampling on the immutable restraints which encircle the kingdom of the Holy One, but by his entering by a new and living way, consecrated into the Holiest of all by the blood of Jesus. And so the great truth, which requires to be explained and vindicated, is fully set forth in reply to what was meant to be and wore the appearance of a plausible objection against the conduct of our gracious Master. It is now the very diadem of beauty and of glory that crowns his brow forever. "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them."

But we now go on to consider the last part of this parable.

"*Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. And he was angry, and*

he would not go in: therefore came his father out, and entreated him. And he, answering, said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee; neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment; and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: but as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found."—Luke xv. 24–32.

The detailed and particular description in this part of the parable, is utterly inconsistent with a mere generalizing interpretation here; unless, indeed, we would make the parables, which were meant to give instruction "more abundantly" to the spiritually taught, nothing better than pretty stories, with some single truth shrouded and folded in a great and cumbrous drapery. At the same time, it must be admitted that very considerable difficulty exists regarding this part of the parable. Whom does the elder son represent?

This question has been answered by some thus:—The elder brother represents the Jew, who murmured at the introduction of the Gentile within the terms of the gospel covenant to equal privileges with himself. This explanation, when merely looked at generally, seems to meet the parable, but is found to be altogether untenable on a closer examination. "The mystery of the admission of the Gentiles into God's Church was not yet made known in any such manner as that they should be represented as of one family with the Jews;—not to mention that this interpretation fails in the very root of the parable—for in strictness the Gentile should be the *elder*—the Jew not being constituted in his superiority till two thousand years after the creation. The upholders of this interpretation forget that when we speak of the Jew as elder, and the Gentile as younger, it is in respect not of birth, but of *this very* return to and reception into the father's house, which is *not to be considered yet*," in the opening part of the parable.—(Alford.)

This latter objection can not be set aside. But, besides this, what ground have we for introducing a subject like this, so totally alien from all that our Lord had then in hand? What had the

introduction of the Gentiles into the Church to do with the objection made by the Pharisees that Christ received publicans and sinners? Such an explanation is opposed to the whole scope of our Lord's personal mission, which he himself describes, when he says, "I am not sent, but unto the lost sheep of the *house of Israel*." The attempt to make the explanation more plausible, by supposing that some of the publicans might be Gentiles, is utterly groundless, and only proves the insuperable difficulty of such an explanation at all. No Gentiles are spoken of, nor are heard of at the time, as being within reach of our Saviour's voice, and the introduction of the subject of the Gentile Church at all, is altogether improbable. Besides it fails in other essential points as well as those mentioned above. How can it be that God should be represented as saying to the Jew, the elder brother, at the very time when the latter was filling up the measure of his iniquity, and the blood of all the slain servants of the Lord in past generations to be required at the hands of that generation who were to slay Christ, and whose house was to be left desolate—how could he be truly represented as saying to him, "Son, *thou art ever with me*, and all that I have is thine?" Such language as this is not only not to be reconciled with, but is totally opposed to, what is said of the removal, the cutting off, the putting away of the Jewish Church, when the Gentiles were called in, as it is set forth in the eleventh chapter of Romans. Nay, more, it is diametrically opposed to the only parable of our Lord in which he plainly intimates what would afterward take place, when the Jewish Church should be lost sight of in the calling in of the Gentiles. In the parable of the wicked husbandmen, he refers by universal admission to Jew and Gentile. And in what way? The Jews are the wicked husbandmen who slew the servants sent, from time to time, for the fruit of the vineyard, and added this greatest crime to all the rest, that when the son of the lord of the vineyard was sent, they caught him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard. And our Lord's solemn conclusion to this terrible similitude is, that the Lord of the vineyard will miserably destroy those wicked husbandmen, and will let out the vineyard unto others, who will render him the fruit in due season. This was the fearful doom awaiting the Jewish Church—a doom which settled heavily down upon them in that

day of unparalleled ungodliness, when they shouted out, as Jesus was being led forth to be crucified, "His blood be on us and on our children."

Now, it is at once admitted that one of the excellences of Scripture, is the endless variety with which Infinite Wisdom places his truths before us. But that is a very different thing from placing one and the same thing in such a light as to be *absolutely and diametrically opposed* to itself. We may have countless images which, taken altogether, give us large and glorious views of those things which are taught; but what should we say to have a series of illustrations of the same truth, which are in their nature perfectly and entirely incongruous with each other? And how, then, can we for a moment suppose that our Lord, in one parable, would speak of the Jews in the terrible announcement that they would be miserably dstroyed, and the vineyard hitherto kept by them given out to others, and yet, in another parable, represent the father as saying to these same Jews, in connection, too, with these very successors of themselves in the vineyard, "*Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine!*" We dismiss, then, this interpretation as most objectionable, while it will be found that in disposing of another which can not either be sustained, it has, in common with the latter, one objection equally fatal to both.

All that has been urged against the explanation which makes the ninety and nine sheep, or the ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance, to signify the Pharisees, applies with tenfold force here. To regard the elder son in the parable as representing these Pharisees, is to bring in complications into the interpretation, which render it well-nigh unintelligible. For, first of all, when the publican was brought back, converted, made a disciple of Jesus, did this bring him back to the *Pharisees*, as well as to his heavenly Father? And when Jesus sought and found and received a Matthew or a Zaccheus, was there a single act or word of his which bears the slightest analogy with the father in the parable going out and entreating his elder son to come in? Did our Lord ever speak to the Pharisees, or of the Pharisees, as those whom he was anxious to *reconcile* to the fact of his admitting publicans and sinners to himself? Far from it. He makes the entrance of these very publicans into the kingdom

of heaven an argument for the sternest rebukes against the Pharisees for their lack of repentance. And can we forget his conduct when he sat at meat in the house of Simon the Pharisee, and the poor woman had washed his feet with the tears of bitter sorrow? Did he strive to reconcile Simon to his admission of this poor lost child into favor? On the contrary, he made the circumstance an express occasion for administering the sharpest reproof to his proud self-righteous host—giving him to understand that the conduct of the poor woman ought to be his, and that for him as for her, there was but one way of being restored to God's favor, namely, by being found humbled and penitent at the feet of Jesus.

But further. How is it possible to sustain this interpretation in the face of the statement made by the elder son, and uncontradicted by the father, "*Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I thy commandment at any time?*" Is it credible that our Lord in a parable meant to introduce prominently and emphatically the case of those whom he denounced as those "who say and do not," could yet give a tacit admission to the fact that they were really faithful and obedient children? And still further, is this credible, when not only no contradiction is given to the assertion of constant steady obedience, but when, in addition, the father declares, "*Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine?*" Such language could only be calculated to mislead and deceive. If hypocrites and self-deceivers, extortioners and unjust, proud and self-righteous men, can be addressed thus, even in the language of one parable, we may well be permitted to say in another spirit than Pilate, "what is truth," or, "where is truth?"

And these objections tell with equal force against the explanation which makes the elder brother the Jew. So that, unless we give up the very pith and marrow of this part of the parable altogether, we must set aside both these interpretations as fatally defective in the very point in the story on which it altogether turns—the very hinge of the door which we desire to open.

That there must be a harmony of interpretation throughout these three parables is universally admitted. The lost soul of man finds its similitude in the lost sheep, the lost piece of money, and the lost son. The latter parable does not introduce a new

subject. It only places the same subject with which the other two parables had to do, in a new light. It fills up and completes the picture representing man as fallen away from God. When, therefore, we are told of the ninety and nine sheep which were *not* lost, of the nine pieces of money *not* dropped from the purse, the elder son who did *not* leave his father's house, we ought, in all consistency of interpretation, to look to the latter as filling up an important part of the parabolic picture of the sheep that strayed not, and the money that was not lost. Whatever view is taken of these must be carried on to the case of the elder son.

Now the ninety and nine sheep are said by our Lord to mean "ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance." And so we add, the "*elder son*" in the parable before us represents "*just* persons which need no repentance." And what is said of him exactly corresponds with this. When introduced to our notice in the parable, he is just returning from the field. His younger brother's conduct had not influenced him. He is actively engaged in his proper and fitting employment in his father's property. He is able to call his father to witness that he never transgressed a single commandment of his. By his silence his father admits the truth of this—in other words, admits that he needs no repentance, and marks his sense of his righteous or just conduct by telling him that all that he has belongs to this his son who has never left him, never given him a moment's uneasiness, and who shall continue ever with him.

Now, in the view we have taken of the ninety and nine just persons referred to in the first of these parables, we have adopted the alternative mentioned by Alford, and regard them as representing those holy and pure beings which retained and still retain their state of holy, happy obedience, when man fell away; and, therefore, as a necessary consequence, we must regard the elder son in this parable as representing the same happy and glorious beings. Nor are we driven to this explanation as one of necessity to be taken in order to give a consistent interpretation of all three parables, but we adopt it because it just does in this part of the third parable what is done in other parts that are equally prominent—it adds important material to us for our complete perception of the case of these ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance, while at the same time it completes, in the

most remarkable manner, our Lord's explanation of the great truth, that he received publicans and sinners.

In the first parable and in the second, while it was quite easy to represent joy in heaven over the penitent, by the shepherd and the woman severally gathering their friends together and bidding them to rejoice, it was nevertheless impossible to express, in the imagery of the one or the other, the sentiments which might possibly exist among the holy and pure beings from the midst of *whom* one had strayed, and afterward been restored to their number. Nothing in this direction could be obtained from the figure of ninety and nine sheep, or of nine pieces of money; but the case of the elder son is one in which these sentiments may find their just and remarkable expression.

Nor can it be fairly objected to this view, that as the servants represent angelic beings, the elder son can not represent them too, seeing that the very nature of those who are so represented demands this. Angels are servants, in one sense, of their heavenly King. In another, they are children of their heavenly Father. It is in the latter relationship that the peculiar sentiments existing among them must be developed on the restoration of the lost, prodigal son. And, therefore, there is no inconsistency, but rather fitness, in the complex figure of servant and son in the parable representing but one class, namely, those holy and pure beings who have "kept their first estate." And this is just according to our Lord's mode of teaching in other parables. Thus, in the parable of the ten virgins, we have the five wise virgins going in merely as friends to the marriage. And yet they represent, at the same time, the people of God, who are themselves *the bride*. And so in the parable of the marriage-supper, the guests there are the people of God, while at the same time they are the bride of the King's Son. So here, the servants in this house refer to angelic beings, and as such, they are seen to minister to the heir of salvation. The elder son also represents the same beings; and he is seen admitting not only into his former place, but above himself, the once prodigal, but now forgiven child.

And there is this further to be observed throughout the three parables. All of them express the joy on the lost one found--all describe it as a festal occasion when the wanderer is brought back.

The shepherd did for his own sheep he had found, what he never did for the others. The woman rejoiced over the finding of the one piece more than she did over those she had not lost. And so, in the parable before us, this superior joy is indicated in the story by the special fact mentioned, and to which the elder son pointedly refers as marking a festivity which had never been exhibited in his case; the fatted calf was killed for the younger son, while the elder never had even "a kid to make merry with his friends." And thus in heaven there is more joy over the return of the penitent, saved soul, than over those pure and holy beings who never fell. So that, while in priority of birth, the angels are to men as the elder brother to the younger, and as regards the actual nature of each, "man was made a little lower than the angels," and so in this sense too, second or youngest son in the Father's house, yet on that day, when not priority of birth, but the special work of redeeming love shall finally order and arrange the whole household of God, there shall be given to man what angels never have had, nor shall have, "to sit down with Christ on his throne." A marriage-supper shall be spread for him, such as heaven has never witnessed. And when the Lamb's bride shall appear in all the glory and the beauty of her marriage raiment, as the King's daughter and his son's wife, then shall the superior gift of grace bestowed on the race of man appear, and he who, when created, was lower than the angels, shall, in his new creation, rise above them in the glory and dignity of his Father's house.

The difficulties in the way of this interpretation are far more apparent than real. They may be stated in a single sentence. How is it possible to suppose that pure and holy beings, such as the angels are, who have never fallen, should not merely object to the return of sinful man, but should be angry, and at first refuse to admit this wayward one again among themselves? This is alone what, with any plausibility, can be objected to the explanation now given. And far from being insurmountable, it will be found that the very ground on which the objection rests, furnishes a very remarkable and important confirmation of the view now taken.

But, before noticing the objection, it may be well just to observe how in every thing in the parable (keeping out of view for the present the difficulty now mentioned) the explanation given

suits the story. First, the simple fact stated. The elder and the younger son. Angels first, and then man. Then the contrast—man leaving his first love, and breaking away from God—living at a distance from him, and serving sin and Satan. On the other hand, the angels—those ministers of his who do his pleasure—cleaving to God—gathering nearer to him, as the blank is made by the lapse of the transgressor—more jealous of his honor and glory than before—diligent, constant, and persevering in his service. While man is in a strange land, wasting his substance with riotous living, the faithful ones of God are "in the field," caring for their Father's profit and honor. Then the clear conscience of the latter, not afraid to have the eye of God on them—not boasting of their own worth any more than Paul boasted of his apostleship, but stating the simple truth, and supported in this by the God of truth himself. Then *his* gentle bearing toward them—no wrath on his brow, for these children deserve none. He has no rebuke for them, no work of forgiveness and atonement to be done in their case; it is only entreaty, instruction, information, and guidance—and the continued assurance that, whatever may be the blessings which he is lavishing on his restored and penitent child, *their* cup shall never have one drop the less of everlasting joy. All that he has shall be theirs forever, as it has ever been before.

But now as to the difficulty in the way of this interpretation. We first remark upon the parable itself, that the conduct of the elder son, far from exciting surprise or condemnation, ought rather to be regarded as just the fitting and appropriate filling up of the imagery of this simple story. We have a father of blameless life and character, kind and loving to his children, showing the greatest forbearance and long-suffering to a disobedient and reckless son. We have an elder son walking in all his father's ways—taking him as his example—loving his character—cheerfully submitting to serve him and to receive all that he had continually from him—to get from him "day by day his daily bread." Nor is there a word in the parable to show that he did otherwise than deeply sympathize with his kind parent under the trying circumstances in which he was placed by the conduct of his younger son. Nevertheless, he continued to do his father's work. He would to the utmost of his power sustain his father's

character, and by steady, child-like obedience endeavor to remove from his father's house the blot which his brother's conduct had brought upon it. On his return home one evening from the field, after fulfilling his own work, he is surprised by the tokens of special mirth in the house. He immediately inquires the cause. A servant tells him that his brother has returned; but the information goes no further than that he is "*safe and sound*," and that a special honor has been shown him by the killing of the fatted calf. Is it to be wondered at that, with his ignorance of the real state of the case, he was angry? He knew nothing of what had passed between his father and brother. The mere fact stared him in the face, that one who had brought such foul dishonor on his father and his father's house—who had broken the family bond and made his father's name a by-word, should be received with *honor* into that house. He had no reason for supposing he was different in character from what he was when he went forth. And yet a special mark of parental favor is shown him as soon as he chooses to set foot within the house he had despised and dishonored. Will not this last be worse than the first? Will not such a reception as this of a wayward prodigal do more to bring discredit on his father than his first departure from home could ever have done? His father hears of his eldest son's return. He goes out to him. He is perfectly aware that what has taken place needs explanation, and that none can give it but himself. The sight of his father calls powerfully forth the feelings of the son. He speaks as one in amazement at the effect of this conduct. He has never transgressed his father's commandment for a moment. His brother had devoured that father's living with harlots. And yet the latter is raised in dignity over the other! How can he account for this! What must be the general conclusion from it? His father speaks to him in reply—"Thou art my dear son. All that I have is thine. Do not think that what I have done casts the least slight on the great principles of child-like obedience which I have ever taught, and you have ever followed. But 'IT WAS MEET' that all this should occur when your brother returned. There is righteousness in this act. It is proper, and for this reason—not merely that he is now at home again—not merely that he has chosen to return as he chose to go—but because he has returned *a changed*

man. I tell you not merely that the lost one is found, though that, perhaps, might sufficiently show the change which has happened, but he is now *alive*, as he was once *dead*—alive to all the holy and the pure laws and feelings which regulate my house—which bind me to you and you to me—so that my honor, truth, and justice are all vindicated by his very return, and the blank in my house once more filled with increased honor to me and happiness to you; so that in this sense too, '*all that I have is thine.*'" And here the parable closes, leaving it obviously to be inferred that the entreaty of the father was at once successful, and that the elder son went in and partook of the joy in his father's house.

Now, taken as a mere narrative of what might be supposed to occur in one of the families of man, there is nothing in the conduct of the elder son, as stated above, reprehensible, but the reverse. We behold a young man exceedingly jealous for his father's honor, misapprehending for a moment his father's conduct, but cheerfully acquiescing in it when his father speaks to him in order to remove his misapprehension.

But in that which is here illustrated can we suppose that angelic beings would conceive or could express such mistaken impressions of the conduct of their heavenly Father? The answer to this is very simple. They *needed* instruction regarding God's dealing with his erring ones among men, because Scripture tells us that they are encouraged to "look into these things;" and hence the same Scripture assures us that one of the purposes of redeeming love to man is "to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be *known* by the Church the manifold wisdom of God." "Known" to the angelic beings because they never could comprehend it otherwise than through this fatherly teaching—and, moreover, because the end of the great Redeemer's work is to "gather together in one all things which are in heaven, and which are on earth." Now, if this instruction had been withheld—if this needful information had been kept back, what is there in the nature of angelic beings to prevent them from regarding God's work in "receiving sinners" unto himself very much in the light exhibited in the parable? Perfect as they are, they are not infallible. High, intelligent, and glorious as they are, they have had terrible evi-

dence in their own ranks that these things do not necessarily prevent a fall. If some among themselves kept not their first estate, but fell from their lofty position by pride of heart against Jehovah, is it difficult to conceive that they who remained as yet faithful—if they had been *left uninformed* on a point involving the character of their king for unchangeable justice, for love of truth and holiness as well as mercy, inasmuch as he received sinful men when even sinful angels were passed by—that they might have felt toward God very much as this elder son is said in the parable to have done toward his father?

It will then be admitted that, under the supposition that angelic beings had been kept in ignorance of the great principles which lie at the root and pervade the whole work of forgiveness to the sinful child of man, they might well be supposed to start back with horror and anguish at such treatment of the sinner as would appear to them to confound all truth and falsehood, right and wrong together, and to sap the very foundations of their Father's throne; and this, then, is all that the parable is intended to convey. Our Lord does not mean by the imagery he has given us, to tell us that angelic beings actually address their Father in such language, or actually are angry and will not go in. He merely portrays before us what it is quite possible to conceive under certain circumstances might have taken place; nay, what probably would have taken place, had not he been pleased to make known to his angelic creatures the mysteries of his redeeming love, and instruct them in the glorious truths which magnified his mercy, and yet vindicated his law. "This my son was *dead*, and is *alive* again; he was *lost*, and he is *found*."

That this peculiar usage is by no means uncommon in the parables it is not difficult to prove. Thus, in regard to the murmuring laborers in the vineyard, there is involved very much the same principle of interpretation as that now proposed. These laborers are all true servants of God—men who have left their spiritual idleness in order to engage in God's work, such as Peter and his fellows, whose question suggested the parable. Do we, then, for a moment suppose, that when Christ at last shall lavish his gifts on all his faithful ones, that any one or more of them shall be found murmuring against him? Impossible. "As far as the parable is addressed to Peter, and in him to all true believers,"

says Trench, "it is rather *a warning against what might be, if they were not careful to watch against it, than a prophecy of what would be.*" And so, just as our Lord warns his disciples against what *might* be their conduct if they indulged in certain ambitious desires, he, in the parable before us, shows what the angelic beings might have ventured to think of God and of his doings, had they not been taught and instructed so as to see and feel, "Just and true are all thy ways, thou King of saints."

Another parable likewise furnishes us with a similar instance of this mode of handling the illustration. In that of the talents, we are told by our Lord of the servant who received only one talent, that, when called to account by his lord, he addressed him in such language as this:—"I knew thee, that thou wert an austere man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed," &c. Now, we do not for a moment suppose that at the day of reckoning with his servants, when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed, any such harsh accusation of the supreme Judge will be made to his face—rather we feel, that the speechlessness of the man detected without the wedding-garment, combined with the dread horror of the rich man in torment, will mark the appearance at the bar of judgment of him who has hid his lord's money. Our Lord puts into his mouth the expression of what, it may be, he felt on earth, and what he would feel also when judged at last, did not the light of that day reveal him to himself. And so in the case before us. Angels would have judged of God's conduct, even as this eldest son did of his father, had they not been enlightened regarding God's dealings with the fallen sons of men.

Again, in the parable of the unrighteous judge, we have God there presented before us in figure in his dealings with his people. We never suppose for one moment that his being likened to such a judge as this implies unrighteousness in him. We see that this use of the illustration serves to bring out an important view of divine truth, and that is all. So, in the parable before us, we do not for a moment suppose that angels ever addressed God, or ever will address him in language such as this eldest son used; but a most important truth is indicated by the mere supposition that they might have done so.

Once more, in this parable itself, we know that, in the case of

the prodigal son, every one from among the children of men who is brought back to God, must regard himself in no better light than as that prodigal. But, on the other hand, it is never affirmed that each one has passed through all that is described in the history of that younger son. Each one might have done so, and would have done so, if left to himself; and so the angelic beings might, and would, have questioned the conduct of their heavenly Father, if they had been left to themselves to grope darkly amid the mysteries of that work which, while it laid hold on the guilty, yet restored him as a bright jewel to their Master's crown.

The latter portion of this parable, therefore, sets forth before us what the moral resistance of angelic beings would have been to the great work of raising the sinner to become a king and a priest in God's kingdom, had not that gracious Father who devised and perfected his scheme of redemption for the sons of men, been pleased to enlighten and teach the minds of his pure and faithful servants regarding those great principles which that scheme of redemption has alone developed in the kingdom of God, and by which alone he can be "just and yet the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

And let it not for a moment be supposed that such explanation as the above is only calculated to furnish us with mere speculative views regarding the condition of angelic beings, without involving any practical result to ourselves. Quite the reverse. The allusions which abound throughout Scripture to the feelings and the work of these glorious beings are assuredly not given for the mere purpose of exciting our curiosity. Nor is the allusion to them here made for this purpose. The view on which we now insist tends to meet and rectify an error in the natural man regarding himself, as seen and known by the dwellers in heaven. The sinner, inasmuch as it is against God that he has sinned, ever regards God as his special enemy. He has no such thoughts regarding the pure and holy beings which surround God's throne. He thinks of them very much as of his fellow-men. He lives in no dread of their anger, and relies securely on their sympathy. He feels, if he would analyze his emotions, that as far as regards his entrance into heaven, if there were only angels with whom he had to do, there would be no difficulty. He would live in no fear of their shutting the door against him, or excluding him forever

from glory and happiness. It is when he turns to Him who is on the Throne, the King of angels and of men, that his heart is filled with misgivings. It is alone when he thinks of God that the terrors as of a consuming fire rise up before him, and fill his soul with agonizing anticipation. Now this parable places in a very remarkable manner before us what the real state of matters is, and regarding which the natural heart makes so false a calculation. Other Scriptures, in referring to the acts of angels, suggest the same lesson. We read of them with flaming swords at the gate of Eden, standing there to prevent man's return to Paradise. We read of one engaged in a dread work of desolation, when 70,000 of the children of Israel died from pestilence. Who was it that checked him in his career of judgment? Who was it that said, "It is enough, stay now thine hand?" We hear of angels as the reapers of the world's harvest, whose special province it will be to gather the tares in bundles to burn them. And so in the parable before us, we see that if man had had to wait for pardon and forgiveness from angels, he would have waited forever. We see from what source it is that the plan has sprung of redeeming love and pardoning mercy. This is not their plan. Nay, it is so strange to them, so alien to what they have ever known before, that they need to be *reconciled* to it. So that if sinful man looks up to heaven, and thinks that it is alone on the throne of God that he can see his adversary, and nowhere else in the plains of heaven, he is grievously mistaken. Every bright and holy spirit there is his adversary. If they were left to the pure and holy zeal which burns in their minds, not one of them but would bar heaven's gate against him. God alone is his friend. He alone planned to bring him back as angels never would. He alone has chosen to "reconcile things in heaven and things in earth,"—to change the current of angelic feeling, and make those glorious ones not only willing, but full of happiness at the restoration of the lost. And thus, too, we may observe, the condemnation of that grievous heresy by anticipation, in the Church of Rome, wherein guilty sinners are taught to seek the intercession of angels with God! Alas, the true scriptural view of the matter is, that poor sinners should entreat God to check the burning zeal of those pure and holy beings lest it should break forth, and spend itself on the guilty heads of those

who are bringing dishonor on the name and the law of their adorable King.

But, besides, the explanation opens to us a bright and glorious view of the character of the joy which fills heaven on the return of the wanderer. The other two parables speak of the fact of that joy. This shows us what it is. The loud hosannas that shall swell throughout the vaults of heaven on that festal day, when the Great King shall touch the keynote of heaven's great joy, "Rejoice with me," will not be from the hearts of angelic beings who are mere partakers of the joy which brightens the home of their Master. Were this all, their joy would lack one of its most blessed ingredients. They might, indeed, feel the sunshine of universal gladness, and be so far partakers of the holy mirth of a blessed family—but it would be as servants "who know not what their Lord doeth." They might acquiesce in the general festivity, and understand generally its cause, but this falls short of what it will be. The joy in heaven will be the intelligent joy of beings whose hearts the Great Father has filled with all the blessed details of that which causes his own joy. It will be the joy of sons, with whom the secrets of the house are lodged, who are admitted to a fellowship with the father, to which a mere servant would be a stranger, and so their joy will be "unspeakable and full of glory." And surely when the believer regards this glorious prospect as soon to be realized in the kingdom of his Father, such deep, true, intelligent joy among those who have never fallen, when they at length receive the ransomed of the Lord on high, he must feel more than ever the preciousness of that apostolic word, "Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say, Rejoice."

And, once more, observe how this explanation gives the full and final reply to those who desired to condemn Christ because he received sinners. As regards himself, he glories in seeking, finding, and receiving the sinner, while he carefully points out that the restored child must be clad in the best robe before he can enter his father's house, and have a changed, penitent heart, before he can be clasped in his father's embrace. Then as regards others, he tells what effect this receiving of sinners has on them —others, not on earth, but in heaven. He takes the highest grade of created beings. It is with those who are only inferior

to himself that he has to do, and whose sentiments, after his own regarding fallen men, he is anxious to exhibit. And so he speaks of the joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth. And then in this last parable, he tells us what that joy is, the intelligent joy of the elder son admitted to the special confidence of the Father, and thus he vindicates his conduct as the friend of sinners. He is so, because while he admits them to heaven, he has atoned for their guilt, and removed the pollution of sin from them—and all that is holy, and good, and intelligent in his kingdom enter into his joy, and hail this fellowship between him and his recovered wanderer as the highest ornament of his kingly diadem. The mere silencing of the Pharisees, who used these words, "This man receiveth sinners," is very secondary to the vindication of the great truth which was involved in the words themselves. This latter he elucidated. He guarded himself against all mistake, and then, "if any man had ears to hear," he left his discourse to fall with its full weight of moral condemnation upon those who had ventured to insinuate in words which contained real truth, a grievous accusation against himself. The argument, *a fortiori*, will here apply in all its force: "If the receiving of the penitent sinner, as I have laid it before you, be so honoring and satisfying to God, and give new cause of joy in heaven itself among the righteous who need no repentance—among the sons who have never left the Father's house, or grieved him by their conduct for a moment, how ought the mouths of wretched sinners to be stopped who, themselves rejecting the offer of salvation, seek to frame an accusation against me for admitting those who heartily and joyfully close with it!"

We have dwelt at considerable length on these three parables, because of the vast field of truth over which they extend, and because of their touching on that all-important stage in the history of the poor prodigal—his return to his father's house. It is, we firmly believe, in the deep study of these three parables that we may gain such simple, precious views of this wondrous transition from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of God's dear Son, as shall, by the Divine blessing, guard us from being led astray by many fanciful theories which man is not slow to propound—which, on the one hand, invest God with a sternness altogether foreign to his nature, or with a facility altogether sub-

versive of his character; or, on the other, invest man either with a moral vigor which does not belong to him, as if he might win heaven when he pleases, or with such an entire absence of responsibility, as that wherever the guilt of his transgression lies, it is not with himself.

The tenth Article of the English Church seems based upon the great truths inculcated in these parables, and, indeed, forms an admirable summary of them. "The condition of man after the fall of Adam is such that he can not turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and good works, to faith and calling upon God. Wherefore we have no power to do good works acceptable to God without the grace of God by Christ preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working with us, when we have that good will."

CHAPTER II.

THE WIND BLOWETH WHERE IT LISTETH—THE TWO SONS—THE BARREN FIG-TREE.

We now pass on to a brief but very impressive parable of Jesus, and which very suitably finds its place in connection with the leading topics of the foregoing chapter.

"*The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.*"—John iii. 8.

Our Lord's interpretation, as given in the last clause of this verse, at once places us on firm ground regarding the explanation of this parable. The work of the Spirit of God in the new birth of the soul, of which Jesus had just been speaking, and without which it can neither see nor enter into the kingdom of God, is here represented to us under the figure of the wind. The imagery is exceedingly beautiful and instructive. "It is not a violent wind here, but the gentle breath of the wind—and it is heard, not felt—a case in which 'thou canst not tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth,' is more applicable than in that of a violent wind steadily blowing. It is one of those sudden breezes springing up on a calm day, which has no apparent direction, but we hear it rustling in the leaves around."*

With what exquisite beauty is the Spirit's work thus set forth! and with what nicety is the very language, as the above extract shows, chosen just to express what is required, and no more. If we walk forth in a calm summer eve, with all nature reposing in her beauty and loveliness around us—every thing may be still and motionless at first, until, without feeling it even fanning our cheek, we see the leaves of a tree nigh at hand quivering on their

* Alford.

branches. The breath is so gentle, we can not possibly discover from which quarter of the heavens it has proceeded; all we know is that the leaves of the tree are rustling under the gentle pressure of this invisible agent. Who that has studied God's word—who that has drunk from the wells of salvation, and has witnessed such a scene as this amid the works of nature, but must have been deeply touched by the wondrous analogies of nature and grace? God "holds the winds in his fists," and they breathe in the gentle zephyr, or stir in the mighty tempest just as he wills; and he has prepared them for this set purpose, that they may, by their agency, supply the very image of that higher agency which proceeds equally from him, the agency not instrumental now, but efficient, of his own Holy Spirit.

But mark what the special object in view is in the words of our Lord before us. He is not explaining the character of the Spirit's work. He is not telling us what the nature is of his operations on the human heart, except so far as this may be gathered in a secondary sense. He has done this when he declared, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he can not enter into the kingdom of God." His purpose now is to mark that Spirit's work in the outward tokens before man of its existence. He is not so much describing, in the parable, what it *is*, as describing the evidence of its presence; and in this respect his words are pregnant with considerations of the deepest importance. If this simple parable had been well pondered over, and calmly considered in its direct and immediate reference to the great subject of our Lord's conversation with Nicodemus, there would have been less room for such antagonistic views as exist of the meaning of that conversation itself.

Let us look, then, more closely at the figure presented before us here. If, when standing in the open air, we see every leaf hang motionless on the trees—if every thing around us that can be shaken with the slightest breath of wind is perfectly still, we know and are convinced that the wind does not blow at all. How mad and foolish it would be to aver, in the face of the self-evident fact as now stated, that notwithstanding this entire absence of movement among the leaves of the forest, nevertheless the wind is blowing?

Here is the first lesson. We have no right to speak of the

new birth as having taken place, apart from the evidence of the fact. We may charitably hope that it is so. We may speak of one or another, *as if* it were so; but to affirm positively and absolutely that this change has taken place, the Spirit's new-creating energy really applied to a soul in the absence of all outward tokens of such presence, is to fly in the face of the direct teaching of our Lord in these words, "*Thou hearest the sound thereof.*" "*So is every one that is born of the Spirit.*" Unless the eye mark some heavenward progress—unless the ear detect some of those sweet strains of heaven's new song, which the redeemed alone can sing, and which the Spirit alone can teach, then we are but deceiving ourselves and others by the assertion of a change having taken place, without the least warrant for doing so; nay, in direct opposition to the rule here furnished by our Lord.

It will be seen that this view is altogether independent of whatever interpretation may be given of the statement in the conversation, "born of water and of the Spirit." Let that interpretation be that baptism is directly referred to, (which we do not for a moment believe,) or that the work of the Spirit is as the washing of water, of which baptism truly is a most significant sign and seal; let the one interpretation or the other be held of what goes before, there can be no doubt as to what is taught here, that we have no authority for regarding the work of the Spirit as commenced, otherwise than by having such evidence of its existence before us as we are capable, at present, of understanding, and in some measure, at least, of appreciating. If it would be the part of a fool or a madman to affirm that the wind is blowing while all nature lies still in a perfect calm—not a leaf waving, nor a single rustling sound of such movement floating through the air—much more is it both folly and insanity to reiterate loud declarations, and enunciate strong convictions of this or that man being born again, being regenerated, in the absence of any of those tokens by which alone it is made apparent to us, that the Spirit has moved upon his soul, and quickened it into life. Had any one stood by, and heard a prodigal, as it were, thus thinking aloud, "I will arise, and go to my father;" or had any one watched him as he left off evil courses, and changed the whole tenor of his life, turning his face Zionward, then he might truly

gather, "this man is born again." But what should we say if he were to affirm this of the same being, when he was still "in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity"—while he was willingly abiding away from his Father, doing despite to the Spirit of grace, dwelling amid the pollutions of the world, a slave of lust, a servant of sin! Could any thing justify the use of such language regarding him? Far from it. And yet what is this but the common every-day language of hundreds and thousands, who absolutely identify regeneration—a real, moral change of nature and heart—with baptism—tie it necessarily to baptism, and so speak of all baptized persons as truly regenerate! Is this not deliberately to turn away from the solemn caution which these words of Jesus suggest? Is it not deliberately to falsify his statement, and read it thus "*not* so, is every one that is born of the Spirit?"

It is very remarkable, and most interesting to notice, that the Evangelist, who records this conversation, seems to have been, through grace, so imbued with this important truth, that when, many years afterward, he was led to write an epistle to the children of God, while he frequently makes use of the expression which forms the central truth in this passage, "born again," he does it invariably in immediate connection with some one or other of the precious evidences which spring up, and manifest themselves wherever that new birth takes place. Thus "every one that *believeth* is *born of God*." "We know that whosoever is *born of God sinneth not*." "If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that *doeth righteousness* is *born of him*." "Whatsoever is *born of God overcometh* the world." "Every one that *loveth is born of God*." John knew of no new birth, no regeneration apart from these things. In the course of the short epistle to which we have just referred, we see how frequently he alludes to that glorious truth; never, however, without indicating one or other of its most precious fruits or evidences. He never seemed to lose the impression of the words of Jesus, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, *and thou hearest the sound thereof*, but canst not tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." He loved to think and to write of the Spirit's work; but it was not in the misty and hazy manner in which modern theology too often presents it, but as a

living thing seen and heard by its action on the heart, the words, and the life of the sinner. He rejoiced in the Spirit's work when he heard the sound thereof, as it stirred the still things into motion, as it made a shaking amid dry bones, and quickeneth into life the dead in trespasses and sins.

But further, the words of Christ teach more than this. "*Thou canst not tell whence it cometh.*" "*The wind bloweth where it listeth,*" "*so is every one that is born of the Spirit.*" *As* the Spirit pleases, *when* he pleases, *where* he pleases! This, and nothing short of this, is meant here. To weaken or modify the force of this, is to make the language of Christ mean any thing. The words teach us that the Spirit moves on the soul, not in any way set down and arranged, so that man can follow and trace this out, but absolutely independent of all such set and appointed ways. He moveth as he listeth. He is not tied to the preaching of the Gospel, nor to the reading of the Bible, nor to the strange and wondrous providences which befall man. He is not tied to ordinances—neither that of baptism nor the Lord's Supper. He that stands by the baptismal font, and dogmatically proclaims that every one therein baptized is really and truly changed by the operation of the Holy Spirit on his heart, proceeding absolutely from this sacred rite, united necessarily with this sprinkling of water, is vainly endeavoring to set bounds to that which is absolutely free from all such restraints; and he would not be so vain in his imaginings, or so dark in his perceptions, who went forth at his door and bid the winds of heaven to rise from the east or from the west according to his pleasure, as he who demands, as a necessary consequence of his action at the font, the presence of that mighty Being who fills infinite space, and lives in eternity, and of whose perfectly unrestrained action our Lord so plainly speaks here, positively declaring that while we can alone know of his operations by the evidence produced, even then it is utterly beyond our ken to discover whence his first breathing arose.

And still further, "*Thou canst not tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth.*" All that is seen as the gentle wind fans the tree is the waving of the leaf. We perceive that. What has gone before we know not: what follows after is alike hidden from our eyes. So with the Spirit's work. When the sinner exhibits tokens of a new heart—a penitent heart—a heart made alive to

God, and dying to sin—then we see two beings closely brought together, the one acting upon the other, the sinner himself under the power and influence of the Spirit, even as the leaf is seen to move under the influence of the wind, but we know no more. Whence came this? We can not tell. Whence sprang this holy influence first? We can not tell. What shall be the end thereof—whither will he go next? None can tell. As little can we know which leaf is next to quiver in the breathing of the gentlest wind, as the pathway of the Spirit, "*whither he goeth.*" We see him working on one soul, and wonder at the change he is producing; but we must wait to see similar evidence of that working on another, before we dare to speak of his having gone from the one to the other.

But while this brief parable expressly teaches us to know the Spirit's work only by the tokens proceeding from it—while it is expressly given in reference to what appears before men of that work, yet does it likewise very beautifully describe one feature in that work itself on the soul of man. Just as the wind moves the leaf, and causes it to give forth the rustling sound which reaches the ear of one standing by, so the Spirit communicates spiritual movement to the soul. Under this influence, the soul begins to say, "I will arise, and go." And as soon as the desire springs up, it is even with that soul as with the young man at the gate of Nain—"He that was dead sat up, and began to speak." Spiritual movement *in* the soul, and the utterance and expression of spiritual life *from* the soul.

We advance, however, to another parable which will be found to have very close and important connection with all we have been considering in this chapter.

"*But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to-day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not; but afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir; and went not. Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first.*"—Matt. xxi. 28–31.

After our examination of the parable of the lost son, we can not fail to notice the similarity of the first expression in that parable and in this. "*A certain man had two sons.*" We have endeavored to show how insuperable the objections are to the

explanation of the former, which regards the elder son as the Pharisee and the younger as the publican. We have sought to prove, that a comparison between these two is altogether foreign to the scope and bearing of the parable of the lost son, and that the expressions there used are utterly irreconcilable with it, unless we do such violence to the plain words of Scripture as will make it speak any language we please. In the parable before us, however, we have these very parties expressly and avowedly brought by our Lord into direct comparison and contrast. His own application provides the key to the parable. He was, at the time, addressing "the chief priests and elders" who had come to him; or, as they are called, "the chief priests and Pharisees," in verse forty-five; and so as he closed his parable, he turned the whole force of its application on them, "*Verily, I say unto you, The publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of Heaven before you.*" Here there can be no mistake as to the characters intended primarily in the parable. The *first* son is the publican or the sinner. The *second* is the Pharisee or the self-righteous man. And this certainty of application here, materially supports the objection raised against explaining the parable of the lost son as having reference to those two classes. Here the Pharisee, when spoken of, is represented in his true color, in his real character. It is a home-thrust to his proud, carnal, self-righteous spirit. Is it possible to conceive that the very same character so clearly and undeniably set forth in this parable, should be presented in another, as if he were in every respect a loving, faithful, obedient child—enjoying the favor, and partaking fully and forever in all the goods of his father?

And mark the very order here chosen. There are *two* sons. It does not say that the one was the elder, and the other the younger. We are left without any information regarding the respective places in the family of the two. And this is just what we might expect when it refers to two classes of persons in the same nation. There is a manifest impropriety on the face of it, to speak of the Pharisee as the elder son, and the publican as the younger. Nothing can justify such an allusion to those parties as children of their heavenly parent. When they are to be contrasted at all, we are simply informed that they are brothers in one family. But besides this, while no priority of age is spoken

of here, it is important to notice that the *first* of the two sons represents the publican, the *second* the Pharisee. And it may be that this very order was selected by our blessed Master that we might thus have in one parable, where he distinctly refers to these two parties, a significant hint, that in the parable of the lost son, he was engaged in no such comparison.

And further, observe the emphatic contrast between the descriptions given in the two parables. The *eldest* son is "in the field," actively engaged in his father's work—diligent, obedient, and faithful. The *second* son, in the parable before us, answers to the command to work in the vineyard, "*I go, sir*," but "*he went* NOT." The delineation here of those who, as our Lord plainly described them on another occasion, "*said*, and *did not*," is as clear and unequivocal in the latter parable as it is altogether out of the question in the former.

But while the publicans and the Pharisees are expressly and primarily referred to in this parable, we must not forget, that these two parties are but the representatives of the two great classes, in one or other of which all are found to whom the Gospel is sent, the message, indeed, of a Father's love, but the utterance also of a Father's command, until they are drawn by the Spirit of God into the family of God. The natural heart ever has done, and ever will do, one of two things; when the command requires it to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, it will either rebelliously spurn at the message at once, treat it with indifference or contempt, or it will receive it in form, not in power, giving an assent without the heart, and making a profession of obedience which in works is contradicted and denied.

Now, giving the parable this wide scope in its application, it teaches some most remarkable and important truths for all to whom the Gospel message is sent. First of all, it teaches the absolute necessity of repentance in every case. The *first* son in the parable, after contemptuously turning away from his father's command, yet "*afterward repented and went*." He repented of his disobedience—of his resisting his father's command. He was sorry for his fault, and under the pressure of this change of mind, he went at once about his father's work. The *second* son is not excluded from the privilege of working, as far as this parable goes. The door is yet not finally shut against him. But if he is

at length found side by side with the *first* son, it must be in the spirit of repentance also. "*Ye*," (the Pharisees, the *second* son,) said Christ, "*when ye had seen it, repented not afterward.*" Up to that time, they had shown no signs of repentance. They had seen the publicans and the harlots passing into the kingdom of heaven before them—hastening into the vineyard to work; but they "*repented not.*" If at length they shall be found in that kingdom, and honored laborers in that vineyard, it will only be on their repentance. If the publican needs this, so does the Pharisee. The first wickedly and presumptuously disobeyed his father. The second as grossly disobeyed him, but tried to vail his disobedience. The same evil thing marked the conduct of both. They would not, and they did not go; and the one aggravated his sin of disobedience by the insolence of his refusal, and the other by the hollowness of an empty profession. This repentance is absolutely essential in every case. The malefactor on the cross, and Saul of Tarsus, must equally learn that lesson, if they would inherit eternal life.

But further, mark what this parable teaches regarding this repentance. It shows us its real character. The father of those young men had laid his commands upon them to go and work. The first refused, but afterward repented. He changed his mind regarding the great duty of obedience. His relationship with his father appeared now in its true light. He recognized a claim which he had formerly slighted, and was impelled, under a consciousness of duty, to go and do as his father required. This change of mind regarding what his father was to him, and what he owed to his father, could not take place without causing sorrow of heart for his past disobedience. And this is one view of true repentance—the heart enlightened as to its relationship with God, the full justice and propriety of God's commandments admitted, and shame for the disobedience with which these have been met.

The application of the parable by our Lord extends and enlarges this view. What in the parable appears at first simply under the aspect of a command, "Son, go work to-day in my vineyard," is at the close spoken of as "*the will of his father.*" And this suggests to us a special characteristic in the relationship between God and man. When God commands man, it is not merely such a commandment as that if man fails in his obedience

to it he may yet hope to change his Father's purpose in issuing it. It is his *will* equally as his command; and it is at man's peril that this will be neglected. Nothing but misery must follow such neglect. No happiness but in submission to it. And here, then, is another view of repentance. When the sinner truly repents before God, his mind is altered regarding this great truth. He had hitherto thought Jehovah very much such an one as himself. He measured the Infinite by his own puny standard. And so it was a matter of indifference to him to pay much attention to *this* or *that* commandment, as, after all, disobedience to it might not involve so very much. But now he knows better. God's commandment is his *will*, and he now knows that resistance to that will inevitably perils the interests of his soul forever. His mind is not only changed as to the propriety of his fulfilling a duty imposed on him, but it is also changed so as to receive the conviction, that there lies in that commandment such a potency and immutability of will, that eternal life or eternal death are, and must be, the alternatives of reception or refusal.

And it is deeply interesting to observe how our Lord, by stating a fact in the application of the parable, points attention to another characteristic of genuine repentance: "John truly came unto you in the way of righteousness, (this was the Father's command, involving the Father's will,) and ye *believed* him not; but the publicans and the harlots *believed* him: and ye, when ye had seen it, (seen those sinners pressing into the kingdom before your eyes —this first son, formerly disobedient, now hastening into the vineyard,) *repented* not afterward that ye might BELIEVE him." The repentance, then, which makes the sinner aware of the true nature of God's command, namely, that it is the unalterable will of him who changes not, which makes him alive to the fact, that eternal joy or eternal misery is in that balance according as he receives with meekness the will, or rejects the commandment of God against himself, this repentance is nothing else than such a change of mind as can be best described by what the blind man said when restored to sight: "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, *now I* see." It is inward sight restored to the soul—it is the vail taken away from the heart—it is the evil heart of unbelief changed, and the poor convicted sinner made to cry, "Lord, I believe: help thou mine unbelief."

And then, further, the words of our Lord suggest a connection between the great lesson of this parable and that which he taught to Nicodemus, when he told him, that "except a man be born again, he can not see the kingdom of God." He says here, "Verily, I say unto you, the publicans and the harlots *go into* the kingdom of heaven before you." We can not but connect this expression with what he says in explanation of the above to Nicodemus—"Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he can not *enter into* the kingdom of God." These sinners were now, with all earnestness and anxiety, "*entering* into" the kingdom of God. They were, indeed, "pressing into it," as it were, "the violent taking it by force." They were then "born again of water and of the Spirit." This new birth had passed over them; without this they could not even *see* the kingdom—could know nothing about it—were in blindness of heart and darkness of spirit about it; but with it, they had already "passed from death into life," from "the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of God's dear Son." See here, then, just another name for this new birth; it is "*repentance*," change of mind and heart regarding the commandments and the will of God—a change marked first of all by faith in God where formerly there was no trust or confidence—faith so real and living, that it accepts at once and unhesitatingly all that God says, and bows with undivided worship to his will; a change, too, evidenced by a deep and godly sorrow for the past, and a confession of it from the heart; yea, such a confession, as is best of all manifested by forsaking the paths of disobedience, and becoming careful to honor God in all things—to be in the way of his commandments, to have them written on the tablets of the memory, and performed as a delight and privilege.

This it is to be "born of water and of the Spirit;" and see, then, how this parable speaks in similar language to that recently considered, where the work of the Spirit is compared to the wind, which, without being seen as to whence it comes or whither it goes, makes itself known by the effects produced. Here we have "the sound" which all men may hear when the Spirit works in the sinner's soul, and makes him a child of God—regenerates him. He grieves for his sin—acknowledges it; he repents—he walks henceforth, not by sight, but by faith; and, as an evidence of all

this, which every one may perceive, he goes to the vineyard of his father and works as zealously as he had before neglected that work rebelliously. Again, therefore, we have a solemn warning not to speak of the Spirit's work as having been begun, until that work has made itself known in the outward bearing and conduct of the sinner. Shall we say of such as the first son, when he insolently disobeyed his father, that they are nevertheless regenerate, because under the outward protection of the house, and within a saving means of grace? Can we for a moment venture to apply the epithet of new birth to such as he, in his contumely and sin? or shall we talk mysteriously of the seeds of regeneration being sown but not appearing? God forbid. Secret things are known alone to him; and it is impossible for us to know any day when or how he may begin, and either secretly or otherwise carry on his operations in the heart; but this we do know, because all Scripture plainly testifies to it, that we are not entitled to speak of any man, be he baptized or not—be he an outward member of a church or not—be his communion in all its outward arrangements regular or not, we are not entitled to speak of him as born again, except we see evidence that he has "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ;" unless he "repent," and "bring forth fruits meet for repentance." Unless there is such evidence as this, no matter what his external privileges may have been, or are, and no matter whether his life be openly wicked, or his conduct formally devout, as far as we can see, he is "in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity."

There is another touch given here in the application of this parable which must not be overlooked. "The going into the kingdom of Heaven" in the application, is the "working" in the vineyard in the parable, and the going or entering in, as we have seen, is just in other words such repentance as means faith in God, sorrow for sin, and a return to obedience. Our Lord therefore identifies a real living faith with working in the vineyard—no barren principle—no such gift of grace, such as when a man has received it he will henceforth "continue in sin," but the very opposite. It is so vital, so potent, so convincing, that he who has it must be "not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work." It is a foul slander on evangelical truth to affirm that the faith it

professes leads to Antinomian carelessness and sin. This is not the faith which Paul preached and which we have received. The man who abides in his sin, continues in disobedience, refuses to work in the vineyard, has not the faith of the Gospel though he may affirm that he has. If true faith existed in him at all, it would "purify the heart," "overcome the world," and "work by love." No man can have this faith within him and be unfruitful—no man can possess this gift and leave it idle and useless. Faith is the work of God; it is his gift, and he has produced it within the sinner's soul, and his very first, as it ever afterward becomes his ruling and pervading motive is, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Let this lesson taught him never be forgotten. When the Jews asked Christ what they "should *do*" to "work the works of God," he replied, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." He thus bound faith and work together: let no man put them asunder. Faith is in the highest sense work; because it will not suffer idleness in the vineyard of the Lord. It makes a willing workman, not a boasting one—a loving child, not a terrified slave.

We proceed to consider another parable which will not unsuitably follow this just reviewed, containing, as it does, most solemn reproof and warning, and that, too, directed from such a point of view in divine truth as will enforce the lessons which have passed before us.

"*He spake also this parable: A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard: and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he, answering, said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: and if it bear fruit, well; and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.*"—Luke xiii. 6–9.

What may be called the text of this discourse of the Lord is found in the verses immediately preceding. "Or these eighteen persons on whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, nay; but *except ye repent*, ye shall all likewise perish." Jesus did not by these words, of course, mean that the impenitence of those whom he was addressing, if persevered in, would

be followed by an exactly *similar* judgment, namely, the fall of a tower upon them; but merely that just as judgment overtook those because they repented not, so surely, also, would it overtake them if they continued in their impenitence. And it is this word, "*except ye repent*," which forms the key-note to the parable now before us. The barren fig-tree, at length to be cut down as a cumberer of the ground, is just a representation of all those who continue in their sin, and refuse all the entreaties, and scoff at all the warnings of God.

And thus we observe that this parable gives us, as it were, the opposite side of the picture from that which we have just considered. Or rather, perhaps, it would be more correct to say that it solemnly closes the lesson begun in the former. In the parable of the two sons, we see true repentance at work—the disobedient child breaking off his evil course, and becoming conformed to the will of his father; while, as regards the other son, we see the door, as it were, yet standing open for him. The entrance to heaven may still be gained. He has the example of his brother before him. He may yet repent, and be as that brother a loving and obedient child. *But* what if he do *not* repent! What if he continue in disobedience! What if notwithstanding the summons to work in the vineyard, he stand the whole of the day of grace *idle!* What if he continue faithless and unholy, unwilling and disobedient! The parable now before us supplies the answer—and supplies it, too, in a manner terribly significant. "*Then*, AFTER THAT, *thou shalt cut it down.*"

"*A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard.*" It is not an uncommon thing in the East to see fig-trees in the vineyards—and our Lord thus alludes to what was frequently before the eyes of his hearers, to illustrate the important truth in hand. We would not exclude a reference to the Jewish nation generally in this parable, but it is only secondary and remote. "Those eighteen" seem to give an individual turn at once to the whole discourse of Jesus. And, besides this, the *vineyard* here spoken of, must in all consistency of interpretation be regarded according to the inspired comment given in Isaiah, "The house of Israel." It has been strikingly remarked by Alford, after affirming that the vineyard does not mean *the world*, but the house of Israel and the men of Judah; that "the fig-tree planted in the

vineyard—among the vines—(a common thing,) denotes an individual application—fixing each man's thought upon one tree, and that one *himself*—just as the guest without the wedding-garment in Matthew xxii." And it may be added, that the language of the parable is very significant in speaking of this fig-tree. It is not said that the owner of the vineyard, or the vine-dresser, planted it. They permitted its being there, in the vineyard, but neither the one nor the other are said to have placed it there. All that is said is, that a certain man possessed a vineyard, in which there was a fig-tree. In truth, the close of what is said in this parable regarding this tree can alone show by whom it was planted. If, when toil and labor had been spent on it, it became fruitful, then it would be seen to be a "tree of righteousness, the planting of *the Lord*." But if all efforts failed, it would be seen to be none of *his* planting, and when it was cut down, and cast out of the vineyard, it would prove that "every plant which my heavenly Father hath *not* planted, shall be rooted up."

The vineyard, then, in the parable is the visible Church of God, limited to the "house of Israel" in the former dispensation, and embracing all the nations of the earth in the latter. But who is the owner of the vineyard, and who the vine-dresser? Some think that the Father is the owner, and that the Son is the vine-dresser, and that it is by the intercession of the latter that more time and opportunity are given to the barren fig-tree. But this does not appear to be satisfactory, nor to meet the various details of the parable.

It is better to take the parable found in Isaiah v., as our guide to the right interpretation of that before us now. There we find Jehovah himself speaking by the mouth of his prophet, and in his own name. "Now will I sing to my well-beloved, a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill," &c. Such language on the part of Jehovah can bear but one signification. In this "song touching his vineyard," he is speaking to his Son—his well-beloved Son—his only-begotten Son, "in whom he is well-pleased." And he speaks to this son of a vineyard which belongs to him. "My well-beloved *hath* a vineyard," &c. In that parable, then, it is obviously the Son of God who is to be regarded as the possessor of the vineyard. And yet, even as in the protection and safety of

the sheep, "the Father and the Son are one;" so there, while the son is spoken of as the owner of the vineyard—he "*hath* a vineyard," Jehovah, the Father, speaks of it as *his* also—"Judge, I pray you, betwixt *me* and *my* vineyard." And thus as the Son of God is in a special sense "the good Shepherd," though both the Father and the Son guard the sheep, that they perish not, so likewise, although the Son of God is in a special sense the owner of the vineyard, yet the "wild grapes" it produced was a loss sustained equally by the Father and the Son.

We infer, therefore, that the owner of the vineyard in the parable now before us, is not primarily the Father, but in a special manner the Son, the "well-beloved" of Jehovah. In the parable of the wicked husbandmen, who for a season had charge of the vineyard as servants, there seems an approximation to this view. There the son is called "the heir," and the husbandmen reasoned that if they could succeed in putting him out of the way, the inheritance would be theirs. Well, in this parable, we have the heir in possession, though in such sort only, as can be conceived, when the word is applied to the eternal Son of the everlasting Father. His entering into possession, does not rob his Father of his right, but only ministers to his glory; for "all mine are thine, and thine are mine," and "all things that the Father *hath*, *are mine*."

The expressions in the parable fully justify this interpretation. The owner of the vineyard is represented as "coming" to his fig-tree, seeking fruit thereon. This is language peculiarly appropriate to the Son of God, "*coming* to his own." When the father is specially prominent as the owner, he *sends* his son for the fruit. When the son is specially prominent as the owner, he "*comes*" of his own accord seeking fruit. And then at the close of the parable, when allusion is made to the cutting down of the fig-tree if it continue barren, it is the owner who is to do this. "*Thou shalt cut it down*." And this is what the Father hath given to the Son to do. To him is not only given "all power in heaven and on earth," but specially "authority to *execute judgment* also, because he is the Son of man." "When the Son of man shall sit upon the throne of his glory," he will be manifested in the awful discharge of this great trust, on "all nations gathered before him," even as he is represented in the parable as inquiring after the character of one individual in his outward Church, and ready to cut

him down, if he abide unfruitful. And surely we can not but see that our Lord's symbolic action in the case of the barren fig-tree which he passed on his way to Jerusalem, gives the key to this parable. There the Son *goes* to the fig-tree, if haply he may find fruit thereon. He finds none. He says, "Let no fruit grow on thee henceforth forever," and "presently the fig-tree withered away." This is just the opening and the close of the parable before us. The intercession and the work of the vine-dresser are not seen in that parable action of Christ—but *his* own action is very distinctly made known. He comes seeking fruit on the fig-tree, and finds none. And if the barrenness continue, it is *his* voice which will condemn it as a cumberer of the soil, and leave it to wither and be destroyed.

Then as to the vine-dresser. With the son as the owner of the vineyard, we can have no difficulty in at once regarding the vine-dresser as the Holy Spirit. And this is not only according to the analogy of the faith, but it exactly accords with the kind of work implied in the name. Thus while it is true that the Church belongs to Christ, yet it is by the work of the Holy Spirit, his diversities of gifts and operations, that she is made meet and prepared to be presented unto Christ at the last. And then as to the special figure used, there can be nothing more in accordance with the teaching of Scripture than the name and office here ascribed to the Holy Spirit. Thus in the Old Testament Church, in the vineyard of old, we see numberless servants engaged as workmen in it. Holy men of old, servants of the living God, toiled, and labored, and spent their strength in that vineyard. But who was the one great and all-pervading agent that wrought all their works in them? Who but the Holy Spirit! They only spake or acted—Moses, Samuel, David, and the rest, as they were moved by him. Their work in the vineyard was only under the immediate direction and control of this, the great vine-dresser. And so also in the New Testament Church. The apostles and teachers of the Gospel of Christ, and all who have ever either publicly or privately sought to promote that Gospel for the salvation and the sanctification of man, are servants and laborers in the vineyard; but each and all of them are energized in their work, and directly sustained and blessed in it, only by the presence and power of this heavenly vine-

dresser. It is only because of his gracious work and sovereign mercy that all the fruit in the vineyard has not been from first to last as "wild grapes." If in any one individual in the Church there has ever appeared, or ever will appear, one manifestation which is acceptable to God, that is alone by the efficient working of this gracious Being. He it is who by countless providences of mercy and of judgment, by unceasing appeals to the conscience and the heart of man, has striven with him, and shall continue to strive till the day of the revelation of all things, when his work within shall be revealed, even as Christ's work for his people shall be made clearly known, and justification by the merits of the Son be crowned forever by perfect sanctification through the power of the Holy Ghost.

And now let us see how striking the parable becomes with this view of the owner and vine-dresser. The Son hath done every thing he can for his vineyard. What could have been done more? He is justified not only in expecting fruit, but much fruit. He is represented as coming for this purpose, to see with his own eyes, as it were, whether the fruit is as abundant as it ought to be; and he finds one tree in the vineyard utterly barren. He calls to the vine-dresser, and demands that it be at once cut down, even as a cumberer of the ground. The vine-dresser intercedes for the tree, "*Let it alone for this year also.*" "You have borne with it for a long time: well, try it yet once again, another year. Meantime I will exhaust all my skill upon it: I will do every thing that lies within my power, and if, when you return, you find fruit appearing, you will have your reward; but if not, then cut it down."

Now at first sight, when we hear of the intercession here alluded to, we are disposed to think of the intercession of Christ. Nor can we think of that too much. But it is not the intercession here spoken of. The intercession of Christ is that of a great high priest before the throne of God. It is the intercession of one who has approached through such precious, meritorious blood-shedding as must be heard. It is the intercession of one who there pleads for pardon to poor sinners, even those given to him in the covenant of peace by the Father, and for whom he chose to die. The intercession here is of a totally different character. First, there is nothing meritorious or vicarious in its

character. Christ pleads above *because* he died in the room of his people. The intercession before us is that of mere entreaty. It is an appeal to pity and compassion, not to justice. Again, the place where this intercession takes place is in this world, within the bounds of the visible Church of Christ on earth, where barren trees are found mingled with the fruitful. Christ's intercession, on the other hand, is in heaven. Again, the intercession represented in the parable may or may not have a happy and successful issue. There may be fruit brought forth, or barrenness confirmed. But the intercession of the priest above is a prevailing one, because he is the propitiation for the sin before he is the advocate for the sinner.

We are brought, then, to this point. The intercession here represented in the parable by the vine-dresser entreating a delay before the fig-tree be destroyed, is none other than the intercession of the Holy Spirit. An intercession not in heaven but on earth. An intercession not of merit but of pity and compassion. It is the Holy Spirit striving with man, surrounding him with all his holy influences, interceding in his behalf in the very place of his disobedience and barrenness, for another and another season of trial and probation. Our Lord himself gives to the Holy Spirit this very name, "Intercessor." We translate it in the English version "Comforter;" but the latter is the secondary meaning of the word. Doubtless he is the comforter of God's people; but it is by his being their intercessor first. And how remarkably does the apostle Paul set forth this special office and work of the Holy Spirit in his Epistle to the Romans: "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which can not be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession according to the will of God."

We behold the Spirit here, therefore, in the highest department of his most gracious work, making intercession in the heart of God's people for their growth in grace and increase in fruitfulness. It is he that wings the prayer, and breathes the sigh that rises from the heart of the believer in Christ, and enters into the ear of the Lord of hosts. And when the poor penitent cries

out, "Spare me, cast me not away," "send me not forth from thy presence," it is the Spirit himself who makes that intercession, and whose still small voice has mingled with the cry of the faint, and weary, and burdened soul. And just as he intercedes for the saints according to the will of God, puts into their hearts desires which God will satisfy, so for those who are still barren or unfruitful he ceases not to interpose delay, and to seek another and another year, if so be that at length the owner of the vineyard may receive an abundant supply of fruit from what hitherto had yielded none.

But has he always continued to intercede without setting limits to that intercession? Has he no limits to his intercession for individuals? Will there be no limit to his intercession, as the day of this dispensation is drawing to its close? These are solemn inquiries; and solemnly does the book of God reply to them. When the flood was about to ingulf the former world, when the hand of vengeance was just about to be lifted up to strike, we are emphatically told that Jehovah himself declared, "My Spirit shall *not always* strive with man." A time was at hand when that Spirit would ask no more, and when that time came, the world then existing was destroyed. And "as it was in the days of Noah, so also shall it be in the days of the Son of man." The Spirit of God will not always strive then, even as he ceased his striving before; and when that striving ceases, there shall be a visitation of judgment and fiery indignation such as this world has never seen before. Then, too, as regards the Jewish nation, as long as the Spirit strove with them judgment was withheld; but when he ceased to strive, when, according to our Lord's affecting words, "the things which belong to their peace" were "forever hidden from their eyes," because "they knew not the day of their visitation," and suffered the Spirit to strive in vain; "always resisting the Holy Ghost," even as their fathers had done; then sudden destruction fell upon them, and their house was left unto them desolate.

And so what is true of nations, or of all the inhabitants of the earth collectively, is true of individuals; and the parable sets this forth to us. Each man to whom the Gospel is preached, is as a fig-tree planted in the vineyard. If he bear fruit, well; but if he is barren and unfruitful, why is it that he is not *at once* cut down?

The intercession of the gracious, loving Spirit has warded off the blow. A little longer time is granted. A further trial is given. Some more efforts are made. Nay, all such efforts are exhausted. But if all fail, the Spirit intercedes no more. He has done his work. He has waited, and pleaded, and striven, but in vain; and so he departs. He leaves the soul alone, and the end of that is desolation and destruction.

And I can not but believe that we have here brought before us, under the simple and plain teaching of this precious parable, what, when regarded by itself, as expressed dogmatically by Christ, has ever appeared dark and mysterious, and has also often been the cause of great perplexity and anxiety to the children of God. "Whosoever shall sin against the Holy Ghost, it shall never be forgiven him, either in this world or in that which is to come." It has been generally considered that what our Lord alludes to in these words is some *one* special act of sin; and thus many anxious and fearful ones, who, with fear and trembling, like the poor woman, hardly dare to touch, as it were, the hem of their Master's garment, are not unfrequently tortured with dread, lest they may have committed this unpardonable sin, and so all their hopes be vain, and their final exclusion from the kingdom of God inevitable. "The principal misunderstanding of this passage has arisen from the prejudice which possesses men's minds owing to the use of the words, 'the *sin* against the Holy Ghost.' It is not *one* particular act of sin which is here condemned, but a *state* of sin, and that state a willful, determined opposition to the present power of the Holy Spirit."*

The sin against the Holy Spirit, then, would appear to be just the continuing in a state of willful resistance to all his efforts. He, as the vine-dresser, will use all appliances. "*He will dig about*" the roots of the barren tree—loosen its hold on the world by trials and other means—supply all that he sees and knows to be suitable, and which, if received, would issue in fruitfulness; but if, after a set time, *known alone to himself and the owner of the vineyard*—if after this set time no fruit appears, then he gives it up. He lets it alone. He leaves it in its barrenness to be dealt with as it merits—to be cut down and cast out of the vineyard. And so, when he has thus given it up, when he thus ceases his

* Alford.

exertions, the whole course of sinful resistance, which is now at an end—not because the sinner has yielded, but because the Spirit intercedes no more—is truly and emphatically one great sin against the Holy Ghost. The barrenness of the fig-tree, when the owner of it first came, was sin against himself, because it *ought* to have borne fruit even then. But it was spared—spared by the intercession of the vine-dresser; and if that availed not, he had nothing further to say. "*Then after* THAT *thou shalt cut it down.*" And this sin has, and can have, no forgiveness in this world or in the world to come.

And this, too, clears up the mystery which has often been attached to this declaration, as if there was something peculiar in an act of sin committed against one person in the Godhead, rendering the transgressors more guilty thereby than by any sins committed against the other persons. For, in reality, the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost, includes sin against the Father and the Son. It is but the close and winding up of every kind of resistance and transgression against Father, Son, and Spirit. Thus, when man fell from God, he broke away from his Father and sinned against him. His transgression, however, did not shut up the tender mercy of that Father from him. The door of mercy was left open. Nay more, the Father so pitied his lost one, that he sent his Son into the world to suffer and die in order to deliver him. And how was this gift received? The Son himself was cast out of the vineyard, and by the hands of wicked men crucified and slain. But did *this*, even, avail to dry up the spring of divine mercy and loving-kindness? Did all this terrible sin and ingratitude against the Father and his Son quench the love borne to the children of men? Far from it. Both Father and Son send forth the Holy Spirit, that with his unceasing, willing labor in the vineyard, he may call in and seek out the poor, wayward, wandering sheep of God's fold. *But* this is all they will do. Beyond this there is no other effort. The Father's commandment has been broken—the Son's love slighted; but when the Spirit, proceeding from the Father and the Son, works, and works in vain—intercedes for time, and yet the tree continues barren—then there is nothing else to be done. He who has cast away *this* mercy, who has sinned away *this* grace, has done despite to *this* Spirit, until he shall strive no more, has also

"trampled under foot the Son of God," and cast himself against "the bosses of the Almighty's shield." His sin is not merely against the Father, for his sending his Son proved that that might be forgiven—nor against the Son, for the sending of the Spirit proved that forgiveness might be extended to that also; but it is "against the Holy Ghost," and as such is but the summation of his guilt against the other persons in the Godhead; and when its limit is reached, and he is left alone, then truly there is no hope for him, either in this world or in that which is to come.

And we must not omit to notice, that this sin against the Holy Ghost—this long-continued and persevering resistance against the work, and in spite of the intercession of that Spirit may justly receive its special stamp and character from the closing effort on the part of the Spirit, and the final resistance on the part of the sinner. Thus with Judas—his whole attendance on our Lord was a ceaseless striving on the part of the Spirit, and a continued resistance by him against that striving. His long career of sin proceeded, and at length reached its climax. The moment approached when he was to be left by that Spirit, and suffered, without further effort, to pass on and "go to his own place." And when, therefore, at the table with his Master, he took the sop from the hands of Jesus, and instead of falling down and in deep penitence confessing his purposed sin, he went immediately out; *that* act, might, in its special significance—as the crowning one of a long series of such sins—be called "his sin against the Holy Ghost." And so when the Pharisees contradicted and blasphemed—when, notwitstanding all that was done in their favor and on their behalf, they "did always resist the Holy Ghost," even as their fathers had done—when, in the face of some of Christ's most glorious miracles—those evidences of his divine authority and mission—they dared to ascribe all these to the agency of Satan, then He who saw the heart and knew the actual condition of each soul, perceived that they were on the very point —if some had not already passed it—of sinning away the intercession of the Holy Ghost—that the Spirit was at that moment, it may be, ceasing to strive with their sinful souls, leaving them to themselves: and so that godless blasphemy of theirs might well, in its special significance—as the crowning one of all their guilty resistings—be designated their "sin against the Holy Ghost."

And this brings down the statement of Jesus regarding this sin very close to every man. We have not now to wonder what the nature or character of it may be—whether it *may* or *can* be committed now, or whether it was a sin that could only be committed in the age when Christ sojourned among men. It is a sin which, specially in this dispensation of the Spirit lies close at every man's door. Every man who continues to shut his ear to promises and warnings—every man who gives no heed to the things pertaining to his salvation—every man who continues to give his heart, and life, and time to the world, notwithstanding all that is urged upon him in the way of providence and the pleadings with him by means of grace—every such man is in imminent danger of falling under this terrible condemnation. Over him, as in the parable, the Spirit may be pouring out the supplication, "*Let it alone this year also,*" and if that period pass by, like those which have gone before, then that very Spirit which now intercedes will plead no more. "*Then after that thou shalt cut it down.*" The "*after that*" may be long or short as regards present existence—the "life that now is;" but in matters not, the "*cutting down*" *must* come at length—inevitably come; the sin against the Holy Spirit has been committed, and this world or the next affords no place for repentance unto salvation, but only such repentance as made Judas rush to his Aceldama here, and the rich man wail forth his misery in the place wherein God has forgotten to be gracious.

How terrible is the thought! It may be, another idle word of godless unbelief—another broken Sabbath-day—another indulgence of gross, carnal sin—another neglect of a solemn appeal to conscience—another hardening of spirit against some sad and powerful providence—and the die is cast, the limit is reached and passed over—the Spirit strives no more. The unpardonable sin is committed. The wretched sinner is cut off, and that "*without remedy.*" Alas! what a revelation will that be at the last, when so many professing Christians who have gone down to the grave, in the spiritual slumber which so sadly characterizes a large portion of the visible church—with only a name to live—will be found to have sunk down under the weight of this deadly, unpardonable sin. The Spirit's work of forbearance, intercession, and love has failed, and so wrath has fallen upon them to the utter-

most, and the terrible condemnation pronounced by him whose every offer of mercy they have slighted, "They shall not enter into my rest."

One thought more is suggested by this parable. The *love* of the Father is evidenced by his sending his Son, and his *not sparing* him. The *love* of the Son is evidenced by his freely offering himself, "Lo, I come to do thy will," and never ceasing until he had drained the cup of bitterness to the dregs, which his Father gave him to drink. The "*love* of the Spirit" is evidenced by his daily and hourly strivings with the thoughtless and impenitent sinner—by his arresting his attention on the one side and on the other, patiently and perseveringly giving him "precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little," and by his interceding for further time, that he may yet again and again strive with the obdurate and hardened heart that has so repeatedly and shamefully despised him. See, then, what love is rejected when the Spirit is finally grieved to take his departure from the soul, and all his living influences quenched forever as regards that soul. What love is cast aside and contemned! Truly in its height and depth and length and breadth, it "passeth knowledge." And no wonder, therefore, when the wretched sinner reaches the last point of merciful forbearance, and finally resists every appeal of such love, springing, as it does, from the depths of the heart of the eternal Father, consecrated in the blood and by the passion of his dear Son, and ceaselessly brought nigh and offered by the Holy Ghost, that the terrible doom shall press intolerably upon him forever, "He hath joined himself unto his idols, *let him alone*." He is beyond forgiveness in this world and in that which is to come.

Then, reader, pause and consider, that when the Spirit's love has been recklessly slighted, and he has ceased his striving, the day in which the terrible consequences of this shall appear, will be specially marked by the presence of the Lord of the vineyard once more—not now as one who gave all he had in order to purchase the vineyard and reclaim it from desolation and ruin—not now as one who may be, for yet another year, induced to pause in his final decision—but on the throne, with the books opened before him; and the very hand that was nailed on the cross in redeeming love, will fall with resistless, terrible weight on the

barren fig-tree, as the voice of him, whose gentlest whisper is love itself, shall be heard, "*Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?*" Ah, wait not for *that* day, in order to "come to yourself" and "repent" and "work in the vineyard." Such waiting will be fatal. You will discover when too late, "the harvest past, the summer ended, and yourself not saved." "*Now* is the accepted time, *now* is the day of salvation."

CHAPTER III.

THE BROAD AND NARROW WAY—THE MAN BUILDING A TOWER—THE TWO KINGS AT WAR.

THESE parables speak solemnly to us of the soul's history. We see what must take place if the lost be found. He must arise and go to his Father; and this he does because he is "born again" of the Spirit, whose work is as the "wind which bloweth where he listeth;" and his repentance, too, is of this character, that his mind is changed regarding his father's authority, and his own disobedience, and he turns again to his father, not to be disobedient and idle, but lovingly to submit himself and to "work in the vineyard." We have likewise seen the fearful peril he thus escapes, the terrible alternative which alone lies before him. If he arise *not*—if he repent *not*—if he believe *not*—if he work *not*, then inevitably he will be cut down as a cumberer of the ground.

And we now, then, go on to notice some details in the inner history of the soul, when it is passing through the experience of the young prodigal, as he resolved to arise and go to his father. The first of these will be aptly set before us by the following parable:—

"*Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*"—Matt. vii. 13, 14.

The similitude here is very simple and very beautiful. A traveler is supposed just to have arrived at a point where two ways branch off from each other. He has reached the very spot where, as he can not go back, he must deliberately make his

choice of one or other of them. He looks on them both, and the one presents attractions to him, while the other repels him—the one is broad, and apparently easy and pleasant to walk upon—the other is narrow, and manifestly rough, and difficult, and tedious. The one is terminated by a wide gate through which he may pass with the greatest facility—the other has a strait one, through which he will find it hard to pass, if he get through at all. Moreover, as he looks at the first, he sees that obviously it is the favorite path of the great number of his fellow-travelers. He beholds them going in one after another in goodly bands, and the voice of mirth and gladness, "the harp and the viol, the tabret, and pipe, and wine," are with them. But when he turns to the other, he sees it comparatively deserted—only a few stragglers on the road—no such sounds mark their progress as proceed from the multitude on the other. He is not near enough to behold the expression of their countenance; indeed, they are before him, so he can not discern that *yet;* but, as far as he is concerned, being about to make the choice, there seems to be nothing pleasant or agreeable in joining that little feeble band. He is just about to follow his inclination, when the thought flashes across his mind—after all, am I sure that the broad road is the *right* one? Pleasant as it appears to me now, what is the *end* of it? If, after all, it should lead me away from home, and not to it, what loss to me? Just as he hesitates, one stands by him and tells him, "Enter in by *that* gate, strait though it be—go by *that* way, narrow though it is—shun that other way, for it leads to imminent peril. This narrow way assuredly will bring you home."

Now, this is just what the poor prodigal has to do—this is the choice which presents itself before him, as in the land of his exile his thoughts begin to stir within him—thoughts of home which he never had before—desires which he never felt before, until the poor conscience-stricken sinner says, "I will arise and go to my father." Instantly the conflict begins. As long as it was within his own bosom, agonizing as the reflections may have been which the Spirit has called forth to humble and to prove him, they are yet known only to himself and to God. But now he must "arise and go to his father"—he must take his stand—he feels he must return—he can not remain any longer away—he must set foot upon the road; and so at once he is brought to

the spot where the two ways diverge—the broad and the narrow way.

It is *then* that the world pleads both forcibly and plausibly. The awakened sinner is not arrested in his determination to be on his journey—far from it; but then there is just such a path as the world approves of offered for him to walk on. He is tempted toward it by every feeling in the natural heart which yet lingers within him. What the world says to him is just in accordance with the whispers of his own heart. The poor prodigal who has risen up from the pollution into which he had fallen, will find many specious reasons furnished to him from without, and responded to from within, why he should go as the great number of people around him are going. He will be told that God has not placed him in this world to lead a life of asceticism and gloom; that God is not honored by a melancholy and dull religion; but that while all religious duties ought to be attended to, and Heaven kept in view as the end at last, there is no reason why there should not be much enjoyment by the way. Innocent amusement and pleasure are right and good, and should be freely used. And then the great body of pilgrims on this path of worldly conformity and empty profession is eagerly and triumphantly pointed out. Surely it is enough to see so goodly a company for the sinner to cast in his lot with them. Surely he can not suppose but that such a multitude as that is must be right. They surely can not be lost. If they were but a very few, it is possible to suppose this; but so many! They can not all be wrong! And why, then, should he be different from them? why make himself appear strange? why have the character of being particular, and ridiculed accordingly?

These temptations press on the awakened sinner's soul on every side. They arise from those very quarters which have always hitherto received his implicit confidence. Learned men, men of the world, men universally esteemed by their fellows, shrewd men, "wise in their generation"—those, too, of his own household—the wife of his bosom, it may be—the children whom God has given him, perhaps—a father or mother—a brother or sister—a husband—any of them, or all of them together, may be urging him to take that path which leads home, as they say, but in which he may, at the same time, be "conformed to the world,"

and living in "the course" of it. How terribly potent these temptations are no one can tell but those who have passed through them. Alas! how many at the day of judgment who will then "seek to enter in and not be able," may charge home their choice of the path which leads, notwithstanding all its fair promises, "to destruction" on those nearest and dearest to them here!

Then, we must not pass over the "gate" in this parable. The one is "wide" and the other is "strait." It suggests to us that the greatest difficulty in the choice, when the sinner reaches the point where he must deliberately go on the one way or the other, lies at the commencement of the path. Had there been no *gate*, he might have slipped in unobserved; but to get through this "*strait*" gate will inevitably draw down upon him the attention of the world, its rude and scornful gaze, and its bitter hate, and this, too, at the very outset. If he does choose the narrow path, the first step is through that "*strait*" gate. Is he prepared for this? Nature shrinks and is ready to faint—the heart turns anxiously to the broad way—friends, relations, all encourage it thither. Oh, then, for one among ten thousand to be at hand to help! Yes, when the poor prodigal has arisen, his whole natural desires may lead him on to the path which is so tempting to him; but the Spirit which has lead him hither tells him that the end thereof is death. Has he not breathed that loved word "*father?*" Has he not thought again of his home, and risen for the very purpose, in order that he may go home? Then, if he pass in by the "*wide gate*," and go along "*the broad way*," let him be assured no father will be found at the close of that. *No.* There "hell enlargeth herself without measure."

But, on the other hand, let him take his stand at once. Even as Christ is the "door" of the sheepfold, so is he this "*strait gate.*" Let him see to it, that without any hesitation, he at once identify himself with this precious Saviour. Boldly and unreservedly let him press on, and pass in. Let him deny himself and take up the cross.

"Master, I would no longer be
Loved by a world that hated thee."

And though he be reviled and despised, hated or persecuted, let him gladly and cheerfully endure it all, because his Master went

through all, and much more, before him. Then let him plod on by the narrow way, enduring hardships as a good soldier of the cross. He will find as he proceeds difficulties becoming less. He will experience how different it is patiently and perseveringly to walk in the narrow way from standing aloof, and being terrified and offended by the difficulties it presents. He will find the "crooked made straight, the rough places plain." He will find, in fact, that by walking in that way, he so learns Christ, who is, indeed, "the way, the truth, and the life," that every successive hour in his company relieves him of another burden, brings light to his eye, and elasticity to his step, while, from time to time, he catches a glimpse of the home whither he is going, giving him the assurance that he is in the right path, and causing him, even in the narrow way, to breathe forth his deep songs of joy. He finds, too, that although there is not that noisy tumult which marks the broad road, and which is neither deep nor lasting, there is pervading the pilgrim band on the way "a peace which passeth all understanding." He needs to be on the road himself in order to perceive it; but when once there, he knows by his own experience that it is indeed such a peace as "the world can neither give nor take away."

Let it not, then, be supposed that conversion to God implies what is easy or pleasant to flesh and blood. It is not merely a longing thought of heaven—a sentiment of devout desire to be there—to be safe through the storms of life, and quietly admitted into the haven at last. It implies a decision at once on the part of the awakened sinner—a decision to be made in the face of the world, in opposition to it, and in spite of it—a decision involving self-denying, mortifying, and crucifying of the flesh. It implies a coming out and being separate, a simple faith and a single eye, "choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;" and "esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt."

This parable, then, stands, as it were, before the eyes of every child of Adam, whose heart is stirred within him—who feels that he durst not stand still—that he is passing on from time to eternity, and *that* an eternity either of joy or misery. It stands by the roadside of his pilgimage, and at the moment when solemn thoughts pass through his mind—when anxious emotions trouble

him, it urges on him at once the choice, "*Enter thou in at the strait gate.*"

We must just briefly notice in passing, the use which our Lord makes of this same figure in reply to an inquiry of the disciples: "Lord, said they, are there few that shall be saved?" A vain and curious inquiry, with which they had nothing to do; and yet one to which all mankind are specially prone. All of us will much rather speculate than believe. We are far more ready to discuss than to receive—and to look on than go in. Reader, guard against this. To stand where the two ways branch off, and instead of making the solemn inquiry immediately urgent on yourself, "What shall *I* do?" to begin to make curious and unsuitable inquiries as to others—to be merely watching how others go, and what others do—to occupy your precious time thus, is already to have a leaning to the "*wide gate.*" Your danger is imminent. Your own salvation may be compromised while you are speculating about that of others. And so listen to the earnest word which our Lord attached to the admonition as given in Matthew, when he would reprove such conduct. "Strive, he says, to enter in at the strait gate." "*Agonize* to enter in." This is no time or place for such idle, perverse curiosity. Your life or death are trembling in the balance. Go now, or it may be too late. Tarry a little longer indulging in these idle imaginings, and you may find the door shut, and all effort to enter utterly in vain. "*Strive*" at once to enter in. Contend earnestly as one who struggles for his life. Put forth all your energy, all your strength. Exhaust your every resource, for the issue is eternal life if you enter, but "weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth" if you are shut out.

But when the penitent is led to "arise and go to his father," and when he finds at the very outset that he must make his choice between conformity to the world, or separation from it—walk with the multitude, or by his faith, "condemn the world," when he must openly and avowedly take his journey with Christ, in distinct and declared antagonism to the world which crucified him; let it not be supposed that when he passes in by the strait gate, and begins his journey on the narrow way, all that is required of him is to be certain that he is right, and the path he now pursues is one leading home to his father and to happi-

ness forever. This alone will not suffice for him as he enters on his pilgrimage. He must not only be sure that he is right—that he is on the way home, but if he would walk therein, as a child of his heavenly Father, as a subject of his heavenly King, as a disciple of his heavenly Master, and overcome its difficulties, triumph over its obstacles, lift cheerfully its many crosses, bear its numerous trials, and have its bitter waters made sweet and refreshing to his taste, he must, as he enters on it, "count the cost." He must not rush into it blindfold, with a strong impulsive feeling, as transient, it may be, as superficial; as destitute of root as it is likely to be scorched by the first thing which tries it. He must not go headlong on his journey, as if the first step secured all the rest, and he had nothing to do but to go *in*, in order to go *on*—as if, now that he had a mind to proceed by that way, it was as good as passed over. No, he must look well to what he is about—he must gird up the loins of his mind—he must see to his armor that it be well and tightly buckled on, for the contests before him are to be waged with a foe of terrible strength, and unequaled cunning, and the pilgrim who safely reaches the end of his path, has his song of triumph equally divided between the praise he owes to his master for putting him into the way, and what he owes to him for carrying him in safety to the end of it.

Now mark, therefore, how our Lord guards us in this respect, and by two very striking parables, gives us to understand how we must take heed not to boast ourselves when girding on our armor, as if we were taking it off. Here is the first of them.

"*For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish.*"—Luke xiv. 28–30.

This parable of our Lord was delivered by him under circumstances which must have made it most significant to his hearers. He had been speaking of the necessity of showing mercy and kindness to the poor, when one who heard him cried out, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God." This at once gave occasion to our Lord to utter the remarkable parable of "The Great Supper." Those who heard him, seem to have been much impressed by it. Probably their minds as usual

adopting a specially carnal view of our Lord's words. However the impression was so great, and for the moment they were so attracted to Jesus, that "great multitudes" went with him. And then it was that, as we are told, "Jesus turned and said unto them, If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he can not be my disciple." And then immediately followed the parable just quoted.

Jesus perceived the state of heart pervading this "great multitude." They were under a slight and transient impression. Their following him pleased and gratified them for a moment, and they probably thought that they would very gladly continue to be his disciples. He then at once turned to them, and solemnly warned them, that discipleship was no easy thing. It was not so pleasant as they were disposed to think. He would not have *one* follower otherwise than as he was thoroughly alive to all that he had to do, and to suffer, all that he had to bear of self-denial, reproach, shame, and even death itself. Unless he was prepared deliberately and honestly to face all these, he *could not* be Christ's disciple.

These words, "if any man hate not," &c., form the theme as it were of the parable now before us. Their meaning is very obvious. No one for a moment supposes that our Lord meant *absolutely* that they should hate their relations. His whole life and teaching, his conduct to his mother when he was on the cross, refute such a notion at once. Yet it is interesting to observe how our Lord with infinite wisdom, even by the words themselves, guards himself against possible misconstruction. For he says not only, "if any man hate not his father and mother," and so forth, but "*his own life also*." To know what he means by the hate in the one case, we have only to consider what it can mean in the other. Obviously, then, what he means is this, that true discipleship implies a readiness on the part of the disciples to give up all for Christ. If one or another dearly cherished object stands on one side, and Christ on the other, we must not hesitate to choose the latter. The very love we bear to the former constitutes the trial. We love them not *the less*, because we can not go with them; but we love Christ *more*, and can not but take up his cross to go after him. Yea, this may be to the very death. He may require this at our hands, and we must be prepared to yield it.

This is in one point of view "*the counting of the cost*" spoken of in the parable, and what every one must do who would not end in misery himself, and be the object of mockery before others. All this must be deliberately considered and well weighed and calmly adopted, by him who would "run with patience" in the "way that leadeth unto life."

Consider the parable briefly. A man about to build a house, if he is wise, will be careful what he is doing. He wishes to have a house in which to shelter himself. But if he spend all he has to spend on the foundation, and be utterly unable to finish the building, he is a fool both ways. He has not succeeded in what he set about, and he has squandered means in a profitless undertaking. No wonder if he be the laughing-stock to those who pass by. No; his first duty is "*to sit down*" calmly, and to look over every thing connected with his plans, to satisfy himself that he is about to commence what he will be able to finish, and to attempt no more. That plan alone secures a good beginning, and a happy successful ending.

And so, on entering in at the strait gate, the sinner must do this calmly and deliberately. He must, as it were, "*sit down first, and count the cost.*" He must ask himself if he is prepared to meet the exigences of the great work to which he is giving himself. He is surrounded with those things which minister to his earthly comfort and happiness. Is he prepared to give up all these things at the command of his Father? Is he prepared whenever their claims upon him would interfere with what his Master demands at his hands, at once to set them aside for the sake of Jesus? Yea, is he ready like Paul to say, "I count not my life dear unto me, so that I might win Christ, and be found in him?" Is he ready, out of the wreck of earthly things, from blighted hopes, and crushed feelings, to gather his material for his building? In other words, does he deliberately make up his mind to such a sanctified holding of every thing placed in his hands in this world, as to feel assured that if he is called upon to part with all that he has, he must do it at once and cheerfully, well knowing that when his Master makes such demands upon him, it is that he may become rich in every spiritual blessing—well furnished unto the kingdom of God—a wise master-builder, not only laying his foundation well, but completing his building with joy.

This is one of the necessities of discipleship. He that would follow Christ must sit loosely to all things here—must possess them as though he possess them not—seeing that it is not unfrequently from the bitter experiences arising out of these things, whether in the disappointments of life, or in the yielding ourselves to the will of God, rather than in following our own inclination, that he who knows what is in man prepares all those wholesome lessons for his spiritual child, as shall call him through grace to run in the way of God's commandments and not be weary, to walk and not faint.

But our Lord urges the necessity of "counting the cost" by those who would be his disciples under another aspect, and that by another parable.

"*Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth, whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an embassage, and desireth conditions of peace.*"—Luke xiv. 31, 32.

Our Lord in applying this adds, "So likewise, whosoever he be of you, that forsaketh not all that he hath, he can not be my disciple." This parable presents us with another view of what a disciple of Christ must fairly make up his mind to, if he would walk in the narrow path. "The *two kings* here are, the *man desirous to become a disciple*, to work out his salvation; and GOD, with whose just and holy law he is *naturally at variance*;" "and the question for each man to sit down and ask himself is, 'can I with (ἐν, *with all that I have*, all my material of war) my ten thousand, stand the charge of him who cometh against me with (μετά, being *only as many as he pleases to bring with him* for the purpose) twenty thousand?' "*

Now, when once the sinner is awakened to the consideration of this all-important question, "Can I meet God with all that I have? He is coming against me as my adversary. I am a rebel against him. I have dared to dispute his authority, and sought to reign as a king, independently of his eternal sovereignty. Can I meet him when he is coming to contend with me? How shall I be able to conduct myself in this mighty controversy?" Whenever the sinner has been awakened to this solemn consideration,

* Alford.

he is not long before he discovers how utterly inadequate all his resources are for such a contention. He may gather together "all that he has;" but all this, and much more than this, will avail him nothing. And so, in the hopelessness of attempting by himself to meet his powerful adversary, and making the startling discovery that, as regards every thing in himself, he is completely at the mercy of one, who, if he does smite, will not cease till he put every enemy under his feet, he at once earnestly and anxiously sues for peace. Like the king in the parable, who, when his mightier opponent was yet a great way off, sends "*an embassage, and desires conditions of peace*," so the poor penitent sinner, finding out his own helpless condition, perceiving that he is ready to be overwhelmed by the power and the great wrath of the mighty God whom he has offended, seeks to be reconciled, supplicates for pardon and peace. He *sends* his petition to his heavenly King. He pleads with him through an all-prevailing Mediator and intercessor. "He takes with him words, and turns to the Lord" his God. He gives up all confidence in himself. He confesses that he is "poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked." He acknowledges his utter inability to save or help himself; and he casts himself on the forbearance, the compassion, and the kindness of the Being whom he has offended.

Now this, which marks the sinner's first awakening to a consciousness of his own helpless and perilous condition as long as he is opposed to God instead of being reconciled to him, must equally pervade the whole of his pilgrimage of trial as he walks in the narrow way. He must deliberately make up his mind to this point. He must "deny himself," "give up all that he has" continually. He must never for a moment suppose that he can prevail in any thing by his own strength, or trusting to his own resources. He must start upon his journey with the full conviction that for every step he takes he requires the same submission to his heavenly King, the same acknowledgment of his own weakness as he made when first he discovered what an adversary he had standing in the way against him.

When first the sinner is roused to a knowledge of his own danger, he perceives that it is God with whom he has to do. All else sinks into insignificance in comparison with that one thought, "How shall I meet him?" And so, during the whole course of

his earthly pilgrimage, whatever he has to do that is right and good—whatever he has to shun that is wrong and evil—whatever he has to endure of trial—whatever he has to give up of cherished things, on each and all of these occasions he meets the same God face to face. It is God who requires him to do or to suffer. It is God who requires him to shun every evil way, and who lays burdens of trial on him. Even then, as he met God in the first hour of his reconciliation through the merits of Christ—when the scepter was held forth to touch him as forgiven, so must he meet him during the whole process of sanctification—giving up all vain carnal confidences, acknowledging that he is unable to meet God in his own strength, even for the denial of one lust, or the doing of one good thing, any more than he could meet him and demand salvation from him by his own merit. This is the spirit in which the follower of Christ must go after his Master. Unless he thus "forsake all that he has" he can not be Christ's disciple. Unless while he says, "I live," he can also heartily add, "Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God," he can not be Christ's disciple. And so, let every man who is entering on the way of life "*count this cost*" also. The way wherein he is to walk will make continued demands upon him in this respect, to prove him whether he has, with his whole heart, learned the lesson of his own utter weakness, and his Master's all-prevailing strength. The natural self-righteousness of the heart must not only yield at the foot of the Cross to the unmerited righteousness of another imputed by faith; the sinner must learn at that first meeting with a reconciled Father, to bear that Cross ever with him on his way, and step by step, inch by inch, in the practical work of sanctification within, to yield every atom of that evil and accursed thing, which, as it is the root of all man's transgression, sorrow, misery, and death, so it is the last thing which is dragged forth and cast out of the believer's heart.

CHAPTER IV.

THE LOWEST ROOM—THE TWO BUILDERS—THE TWO DEBTORS—THE GOOD SAMARITAN.

We advance to the consideration of other parables which still carry on the history of the soul in connection with the work of Christ. We have noticed the prodigal "come to himself," and resolved to arise and seek his father. We have seen that immediately when this resolution is formed he is met by the necessity of choosing between two paths. He must declare by his outward conduct what he is, and whither he is going. He must at all hazards, and in spite of contempt, reproach, and opposition, "Enter in at the strait gate;" but this must be done deliberately, not rashly—by sitting down first and counting the cost, not rushing heedlessly into it, only to leave it again as hastily, covered with shame, and the object of scorn.

We come now from those general views of what the awakened sinner must feel and do, to the particular details of character and conduct which must mark his whole progress until he pass from his period of probation to his eternal day of glory, and "shine as a star in the kingdom of his Father forever." The first thing which demands attention is the *spirit* required of him when he is graciously received by his forgiving and reconciled Father. We have seen how, when the prodigal was raised to a consciousness of his sin, the earnest longings for his home were mingled with the deepest humiliation. This spirit of humility, then, must not be diminished as he is made sensible of his Father's love and forgiveness. Because he is admitted again and evermore acknowledged as a son, the same feeling which prompted him at first to desire rather to be a servant *in* the house than to remain out of it, though it may not express itself in that way, must grow and

increase, not decay or become weak. And here is our Lord's teaching, then, on this point.

"*And he put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms; saying unto them, When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room, lest a more honorable man than thou be bidden of him; and he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee. For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.*"—Luke xiv. 7–11.

Under the circumstances in which these words were uttered, they were no doubt a lesson for those present as to their bearing toward each other on the occasion when they were addressed, but, at the same time, that which had suggested them was thus made by our Lord the groundwork for an important parable by which he preached to them a still higher lesson regarding that grace of humility he wished to inculcate. It is probable that the entertainment at which the parable was delivered was a splendid one, and possibly many of the guests were persons of distinction. As Jesus marked the self-esteem which showed itself as certain among them "chose out the chief places," etc., he delivered the parable. The Evangelist by *calling* the words a parable, indicates to us the deeper meaning they contain. Had he not prefaced them with this statement, we might have just regarded them as a reproof directly conveyed to the proud and the selfish men present; but inasmuch as it was a *parable* which was put forth, we are led to look beyond the mere rebuke which the words conveyed to persons present, and to others who like them exhibit a similar spirit, and to mark how Jesus merely took occasion of the entertainment then before him to teach a truth in connection with a still greater entertainment—even such a supper as he again refers to in that other parable he shortly after delivered.

The sinner is bidden to enter the household of his Father. He is bidden to hold fellowship with that Father himself, and with all his family. Every thing that is needful for his refreshment and comfort is spread out for him within the house, where he has

been admitted. When, according to this invitation, the sinner enters, even now "to sit together in heavenly places in Christ," he is in a very different position from what he was before he had heard or replied to that invitation. He was formerly an outcast and an alien, now he is a recognized and welcome guest. Now the "table is prepared for him in the presence of his enemies," and he is bidden to partake of the bounties of his Father's house. He must then take good heed to himself. There is no room for self-exaltation here. He must not "*begin to take the highest room.*" The same spirit which led him to feel so unworthy of the least benefit from his father—which led him to stand afar off, and hardly dare to lift up his eyes unto heaven, must characterize him *still*. He is, indeed, no longer the prodigal at a distance. He is the prodigal received by the father—treated graciously, kindly, and honorably by him. But what should we say of him if, when he entered his father's house, and there saw all the preparations being made to welcome his return, the bearing which marked him hitherto was thrown aside, and without waiting to be placed where his father willed, he strode at once to the seat of the elder brother, and chose out the chief place next his father as if it were now his own by reason of the very pardon and forgiveness which had been sealed to him?

And who that has studied human nature by looking into his own heart, but at once recognizes the solemn meaning of such a lesson as this; and how needful it is for the sinner when restored to a favor that he had forfeited, and brought again within the circle of a house which he had despised? Is pride *quenched* in the heart when the penitent makes his humble confession and supplication before God? Is that evil and deadly thing uprooted and all its power destroyed when once the sinner has found the way to his knees in an agony of sorrow and shame, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee?" Alas! no. Within the fellowship of saints it fails not to mark its presence still. Its main features truly are altered, but the monster evil is the same. It deals not now with the vanities which have been wrenched away from the heart, but it fastens itself on those very things which have been so graciously brought into their place—those realities with which a loving Father nourishes and comforts his people. The pride that has been quenched in one direction, too

often, alas! breaks forth in another. If it has no longer things of earth, and time, and sense to lay hold upon, it will stealthily seek for its gratification from the "things that are unseen and eternal." The pride which in its first phase was of earth, earthy, is not the less odious or perilous when it puts on a spiritual guise, and insinuates itself among high, and holy, and heavenly things.

How solemn is the lesson for all ages which the inspired Word conveys, when we are told that even among Christ's Apostles, his immediate friends and followers, there was disputing "which of them should be greatest," and when one of the gentlest and most loving of them on one occasion took upon him to forbid a man from preaching in the name of Jesus, because he followed not with *them*, and on another joined his brother in the request to call down fire on a village of the Samaritans because the latter refused to receive *them!* Alas, it is true, spiritual pride seeks to enter in with the veriest prodigal, even as he is received back and welcomed to the security and comfort of his father's house. He needs not only in the day of his first sorrow to learn the lesson as to the rock whence he was hewn, and the hole of the pit whence he was digged, but he needs to learn it more and more every day, when his gracious Father sets him with the princes of his people.

This lack of humility may display itself in two ways—toward them that are without, and toward them that are within. In the one case, it takes the form either of contempt at the ignorance of those who willingly continue in their sin, or anger at their opposition to the truth. In the other, it plumes itself on the special gifts which mark the spiritual life. It leads the believer to "think more highly of himself than he ought to think"—to look down upon the attainments of his fellow-pilgrims—sometimes to "despise the day of small things"—sometimes "to break the bruised reed, and quench the smoking flax"—sometimes to regard with indifference the work of others in comparison with his own—at other times to overlook some of the most precious gems of divine grace, because he does not look low enough to discover them, and thus alas! frequently to do the very things which our Lord condemns in this parable, "*When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room.*" This parable in fact fur-

nishes us with an exact parallel to the words of the Apostle—and they are golden words indeed—"Let each esteem other, better than themselves."

The injunction is to take "*the lowest room*"—not to think of others at all, but to feel that to be admitted to sit down in such communion is sufficient, and the soul asks no more. Our Lord says that this conduct will be followed by the master of the feast calling the lowly one higher. He does not put forth this as a motive *why* we should take the lowest place, but merely to show that the whole ordering and arranging of these things are of the Lord. "He *may* say unto thee, Go up higher," or he may not. You have nothing to do with that. It is enough for you to be at the feast—leave all the rest to him—with this certainty, however, that "he that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he who humbleth himself shall be exalted." God will himself according to his own will, and in his own way establish this truth. We must honor him by putting all this into his hands with real heartfelt humility. And he will take care just to give us that place by which he will be honored, and we ourselves made happy and glorious forever.

And if this spirit of humility is to mark the sinner's conduct with its special grace, through the whole of the blessed and glorious fellowship to which he has been admitted, we must remember that he is called to activity in that fellowship. In one view of that fellowship, it is as if a man were called and invited to sit down at a splendid and costly entertainment, furnished with guests of honorable name and distinguished character. In another view, it is that the sinner must become an active and willing workman for his heavenly Father. Though we see the prodigal admitted to a joyous feast, we know that the next morning he would be ready to accompany his elder brother "to the field." His turning again, indeed, is just the same as the repentance of the *first* son in the other parable, and his proceeding at once to work in his father's vineyard. In other words though an honored guest, and restored son, he is not to be an idle servant. He has work to do, and it must not only be done, but well done.

Now, the figure of a fruitful tree, or a son working in a vineyard, will sufficiently mark these two things—namely, that the activity of the restored sinner, his bringing forth fruit unto God, is the result of his heavenly Father's culture, and by reason of

the life that flows into him from another, while his own willing, cordial coöperation in all that is for the honor and glory of his Father, is equally set forth; but it is then for the different details of his work—what it is that he has to do, and how he ought to do it, that we now look to a series of most interesting parables to supply us with a full and complete illustration. And the first that presents itself in this series is the parable of the two builders.

"*Therefore, whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man which built his house upon a rock; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.*"—Matthew vii. 24–27. ("*And digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it. . . . That, without a foundation, built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great.*")—Luke vi. 48, 49.

In comparing the conduct of these two builders, we see many points of similarity between them. Each was a builder. They had both a work to do. Both of them set about their own several occupations. The one and the other proceeded to build his house. To one passing by they would appear to be equally wise and skillful—all he could see would be the walls of either house as they were rising above the level of the ground—the one, it may be, attracting him most from a greater pretension about it than the other. The object of both these men was the same. They wished to build a house which should shelter them under its roof, and be the means of pleasure and comfort to them. Both of them had time given them in order to do this. They had opportunity to engage in it as they severally desired. Both of them had the choice of situation. They might build where they pleased. Both of them finish and take possession of their dwellings. This was in fair weather, when all was calm and serene, and gave promise of quiet and security and peace. Both of them were tried. On each of the buildings there fell a great storm, which put them

to the severest proof. It was not a little storm for one and a great one for the other. It was a vehement flood and tempest for both. *Hitherto* they are alike in every thing as far as appears outwardly; but *now*, one house stands immovable under the shock of the tempest, the other crumbles into ruins, and the flood, as it sweeps on its course, reveals the cause of stability in the one, and of destruction in the other. The first is founded on a rock: the second was built upon the earth. And so likewise is revealed the wisdom of the one builder and the folly of the other.

Now even if we look at this parable in its mere structure, we should feel certain that it was meant to indicate some very important feature in the work which our heavenly Father imposes on his faithful and obedient children. The whole bearing of it indicates an earnest, active, and laborious work in hand. But our Lord is not satisfied with leaving this to be inferred. He tells us that he is illustrating the conduct of two parties—those who are not his people and those who are—those who are not in the vineyard, and those who are. And this is the distinction which marks these classes respectively, the "one heareth his sayings, *and doeth them not*," the other "heareth his sayings, and *doeth them*." His great purpose then is to instill into the heart of his disciples that they must "not be forgetful hearers but *doers* of the word," and the mode he has chosen in this parable to inculcate this is, as we shall see, most significant.

And before noticing this particularly, let us just observe by the way, that in the case of the wise builder, we have set forth the faithful and enlightened disciple, who, as he starts in his heavenly career, "first sits down and counts the cost." We see him here now diligently engaged building that house, of all the parts of which, the materials it would require, its stability and usefulness, he had carefully taken note before. He has wisely thought over the plan beforehand—seen the amount of expenditure it would require, and now he is *doing* his work—hard at the building, and never will he rest, until it be finally perfected in glory and beauty.

The special point in his work, then, with which this parable has to do, is his foundation-work. And it is well that this should be looked to first, for all the rest of his work, its stability and its value, depends on this. We shall have yet to trace the returned

prodigal's faithful obedience to his Father, in a variety of active duties in detail; but every one of these depends upon his making a good beginning, and laying such a foundation for the superstructure of good works, as shall make these valuable, and secure their permanence. The works of others may find their external resemblance to his, though coming from the hands of those who are not true and faithful disciples like himself—it is for him to take heed that his work is not simply such as may be seen and approved of men, but such as shall stand before the eyes and obtain the approval of one who looks beneath the surface, and diligently notes each man's work to see of what sort it is.

It is of the greatest importance to mark the scope of the parable in this respect. One of the first charges against true discipleship by a thoughtless and superficial world is, that it is not practical—that there is so much said of faith as to leave little room for works. We can well conceive, in connection with the story in the parable, a stranger passing by on the day when he witnessed the two builders severally making their preparations, and then it may be in a short time afterward, on his return, beholding one building already showing its fair proportions, and rising rapidly to it destined height, while, perhaps, the other has not yet appeared above ground, and it would be a very natural conclusion for him to arrive at, that the first was a much more skillful, wise, and active builder than the last. But he was not on the spot to observe the real cause of the difference, and which, had he seen it, would materially change his estimate of the two. If he had been, he would have observed that the former at once began his building "*on the earth*," just as he found it, and so, at least, he had the satisfaction of making a great show with it, and it may be, plumed himself on the skill with which he nicely adjusted his building to the surface of the ground as it was; but he would have seen the latter "*digging deep*"—not satisfied with lifting a spadeful here or there, but toiling and laboring, and descending deeper and deeper through the soil, until he reached the rock, and laid his foundation *there*. And then, having found that, he patiently and earnestly proceeds to raise course after course on his building above it.

And this gives us a correct view of that which the world understands not. The rock on which the believer's superstruc-

ture of works can alone rest in security, is *Christ.* And he is the true workman—he is the real laborer who sets about his search for this foundation at the beginning of his work. The other is, after all, a mere counterfeit, and nothing better. The building of the former may not have at once the same pretensions before the eyes of men, but it will surely and steadily progress, and every stone that is added to it will remain as a proof and token that his work from the commencement has been real, and not apparent only.

And thus it is that in the parable the foolish builder is said to represent one who "hears and *does not!*" Why, at first sight, we should be disposed to say, that he has done a great deal—he has built his house at any rate. Is that not doing? Certainly not, in the estimation of his master, who sees the end from the beginning, and judges accordingly. The truth is, we must take into consideration from the first, the object of the several builders. Both of them wished to build, in order to shelter themselves. This was their purpose. To fail in this, was to be an idler, not a workman —the man was merely *passing* time, not *improving* it. He *heard* what might have secured real, lasting work at his hands if he had attended to it, but he did it not; and so, to all intents and purposes, he was not "a doer of the work," and his specious appearances came at length to be nothing better than "the baseless fabric of a vision," which vanishes in the night watches, and "leaves not a wreck behind."

The work which the true disciple has to do, is one which must stand and be a shelter to him; and in order to this, it must be founded on Christ. He must begin there, whatever be the cost in the casting away of cherished earthly things, in the digging down and passing through the hard and all but impenetrable soil of a proud, a carnal, and a self-righteous heart. He must never cease until he has found Christ, as the strong rock on which he may rest every hope for time and for eternity. This is the work of faith, not of sight. This spiritual perception of what he needs for his building is the "gift of God through Jesus Christ." He knows and understands by this, that if he is to have any personal work of holiness at all which will stand the trial and the proof of the great day of account, it must alone be deeply imbedded in the perfect righteousness of the Son of God.

And thus, too, we see the wondrous connection between the disciple's work and his security. If he is really in search of a foundation, it is *in order to build.* If he is really, with his whole heart, seeking for Christ, it is that he may go after him, walk with him, and be like him. And further, he must surround himself with all his fruits of righteousness, just as the wise builder raised stone over stone in his building. He is to be seen and known by them—he is to dwell in them. They are to be for a covering unto him. But it is not from them he derives his safety. It is not simply because they are there around him that they remain, and that he is safe and happy. The other builder, for that matter, had the same kind of materials about him. No! It is because they all rest on Christ—because they are "fruits of righteousness *by Jesus Christ,*" that they are every thing the poor believer can desire, as proving the quality of his work, and affording him a safe and happy shelter.

It is "the day of the Lord Jesus" alone which will make known the real character of man's different buildings. As long as they are merely tested by man, it may not be possible to detect the real and substantial differences which exist. Means of observation so accurate as to reveal the whole are not to be found in the present state of probation. It is alone on the day "when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed" that these things shall become apparent. Then the floods shall be let loose, the tempest of divine wrath against sin shall sweep resistlessly along, the streams of all-searching judgment shall beat vehemently on all that must be tested; and then it shall be seen that while mere good works, as they are called, laid carelessly by themselves on the earth—on the mere worldly and carnal notions of virtue and excellence, shall be swept away, and leave the poor soul that trusted in them exposed and forlorn, with a ruin at his feet, instead of a house over his head—on the other hand, the same season of trial shall but have cleared away what remained of earth from the believer's work, and revealed the blessed secret of his strength and security—*the rock* on which his house has been built; and the storm, as it passes, winged with sudden destruction to the wicked, shall not even *shake* a single stone in his building, because it is founded on that rock of ages which can never be moved.

Let, then, the true disciple, since he is called to work and not to idleness, see that he begin that work well. Let him build with reference to the stormy day, not the calm. The stormy will succeed the calm: and it is *then* that he needs shelter the most. Let him then spare no pains to secure a good foundation. He is not a workman called to work in order that he may be seen of man, but that "he may have praise of God." It is "unto the Lord, and not unto man" that he must labor; what he does must be in the "name of the Lord Jesus," and to the glory and praise of God—"not unto himself, but unto him who died and rose again." And all this he must do with "his might," and then let him patiently and hopefully leave himself and his work in the Lord's hands, and his divine Master will take care that during his work he will not appear as "one not able to finish;" and when his work is over he will own it and approve of it. "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

But let us proceed further to inquire into the work of the true disciple to see of what sort it is. He must first of all give heed to his foundation. He must, before all things, take heed that he is on the rock; every thing else will be in vain and worthless without this. But this rock will, to all things built on it in simple faith, impart such real worth as shall make them, though not meritorious, yet acceptable to God—prized by him, and retained by him as precious forever. Look now at one of these things built on this rock.

"*There was a certain creditor which had two debtors; the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave the most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged.*"—Luke vii. 41–43.

The great feature of this parable is *love*. The love of gratitude for benefits bestowed, for mercy freely and graciously shown. There is some little difficulty in the *general* inference which our Lord draws from the parable. At first it looks as if the amount of loving gratitude to him must depend upon the amount of our guilt—as if we must love him all the more because of the depth of ungodliness into which we have been previously sunk; and so

one might be tempted to say, better to sin "earnestly with both hands," in order that when much is forgiven, we may at length love the more. Such a view is altogether opposed, however, to the simple meaning of the parable when fairly considered. It need hardly be said to be opposed to the whole teaching of the word of God, which condemns, in unmeasured terms, sinning that "grace may abound," and which certainly gives us no reason to suppose that the penitent robber on the cross loved Christ *more* than John, or Mary, or the mother of our Lord.

The truth is that the meaning of the parable turns on this point, the *sense* on the part of the debtors, that their debt is remitted. They are both supposed to know exactly what has been remitted to them. They are conscious of this—sensible of it. It is this which underlies the whole structure of the parable; and so the general inference is very clear. *That* sinner loves Christ most who is the *most* sensible of what Christ has done for him. If one man feels that he has been forgiven, as it were, to the amount of "*five hundred pence*," he will love more deeply and more gratefully than the man who is only *conscious* of forgiveness to the extent of "*fifty pence*." In other words, the more tender the conscience of a child of God, the more alive he has become to all that he is in himself, and all that God has done for him and is ready to do for him still—the deeper he will feel himself in debt to his Lord, the larger the amount which he will reckon as owing by him to this gracious friend, and therefore the more full and deep will be his love for the frank forgiveness of one from whom he had no right to expect the remission of one farthing.

But if the general inference drawn by our Lord presents, at first sight, a difficulty, his special deduction from it presents none. He directly applies it to the case of a poor woman, who, while he sat at meat in Simon the Pharisee's house, had come in and "brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at his feet behind him, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hair of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment." Our Lord draws the attention of Simon and the other guests to what she had done. "Seest thou this woman," he said, and then he proceeded to enumerate all that she had done while he sat at the table. He pointed emphat-

ically to every thing that had passed—the washing of his feet with tears—the anointing of his head with the ointment, and then he demands wherefore it is that all these things have been done by this poor woman, all these marks of reverence, love, and gratitude shown to him, which were all the more remarkable in their contrast to the absence of even ordinary respect paid to him by his proud host. He demands how it is that this poor woman has not ceased to do all this, while others were neglecting him; and he tells them that it was because "she loved much." All these things were a proof ready to hand of the deep, fervent, holy love she bore to him, for whom the tears were shed and the box of ointment bought; and she loved much because she *felt* how much had been forgiven. She was fully *conscious* of the large debt which that gracious Master had forgiven. She needed no stranger's hand to point to her and condemn her—she did that herself to the very utmost. If she had been asked to say, she would have replied that she was the "chief of sinners." She felt that she was that one "*to whom Jesus forgave most;*" she loved, therefore, in proportion; and her acts of gentle gratitude and lowly tenderness were a precious evidence of the greatness of that love.

We must not suppose that Simon himself is alluded to in the debtor which owed "*fifty pence.*" This would throw the greatest perplexity into the whole subject. Simon's conduct is quoted by our Lord, not as bearing any proportion to the poor woman's, which it would have done, if he even loved as a debtor whose "*fifty pence*" were remitted, but as diametrically opposed to that of the penitent and grateful one at Christ's feet; for just as Jesus records one act after another of love on the part of the latter, he makes these more apparent by the contrast on the part of Simon, who was not merely niggardly in his attention, but neglected the most common expression of it altogether. He was not conscious of his debt at all, and so he felt no love, and did none of those tender offices of respect and gratitude which would have marked outwardly what he experienced inwardly. There had passed no inner work of the soul between him and Christ, making him feel his guilt and the tender compassion of Jesus in forgiveness, and so his love and his loving acts existed not. She, the poor humbled penitent—she, like that other woman, it may be, who did but

touch the hem of his garment—she had already known what soul-work is—she had already gone through the bitterness of discovered sin, and the gross and thick darkness of that sin had been pierced through by the love and the forgiveness of her Master. That very forgiveness showed her more than ever the extent of her debt—made her more than ever sensible of it—she loved her Saviour more, and there was nothing she would not now do to manifest that love. She would do it amid the sneers and the scorn of the world—she would do it amid neglect and reproach—she would do it, not as one taking the "lowest room" where her Master was, but as one who only desires not to be kept out, and whose station, when once in, shall not be as a guest at the table, but at his feet kneeling and penitent before him who has forgiven her. She, indeed, "*loved much*," because she knew that "*much was forgiven her.*"

And we can not, then, fail to observe here the practical character which our Lord has been pleased to stamp upon this love of gratitude. It is not, as appears by his application of the parable, to be a mere love of sentiment, an emotion of the soul, however deep, and true, and lasting it may be. It is to be that which will find its expression in something to be done. It is, indeed, to be deeply felt, but it is also to be acted out. A blessed *principle* in the *heart*, a glorious *work* in the *life*. And this is among the first precious stones which the true disciple is to lay upon the rock Christ. This, indeed, as part of his work to do, may be called the foundation which he lays on the rock, and over which all his future labor is spent. *Love* to his Master, deep, enduring love to Christ. Love for grace and mercy so freely given. Love for pardon and peace so fully bestowed. Love for sin blotted out, and a name written in the book of life. Love begotten by his infinite love. Love which has sprung from the deepest consciousness of what he "owes unto his Lord," and not one farthing of which he could ever pay, but which has been all "*frankly forgiven.*" Oh, the preciousness of that one word "*frankly.*" Here is no remission of a debt with a grudging which makes the gift ungracious; nor, on the other hand, is there here the canceling of a debt with an air of indifference, as if it were of no importance, but it is "*frankly*" done. The value of it *not* denied, but that value infinitely enhanced by the graciousness

with which it is bestowed! Sinner, have you not found this the character of Christ's remission of your debt?

But the poor woman, as we have seen, had the opportunity of manifesting to Christ himself the fullness of her grateful love. Has his disciple in every age the same? Yes, verily. If Christ be not personally present, yet has he left us a word, which points to such opportunities of showing love to him, as never cease in every age of the Church's history. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it *unto me.*" The love of gratitude, then, which the true disciple cherishes toward his heavenly Master, ought to become a loving work toward all that Master's followers. This love ought to have its most full and blessed expression in the "household of faith." There, in lowliness of spirit like this poor woman, the true child of God may indeed show his consciousness of how much he owes to Christ who has forgiven him, and how deeply he loves Christ for this forgiveness, by acts of tenderness, love, and pity to his people, and that amid the sneers of the world, and the scowl of the ignorant and self-righteous. Such acts as these will, indeed, be "labors of love," and will form some of the goodliest stones in his building. Such acts of calm, gentle, unassuming gratitude to him who has forgiven him, will be among the very first which the poor penitent and restored prodigal will long and love to pay to every one within the circle of his Father's house, not to *show* his love, but because his full heart will not suffer him to withhold them.

We pass on to another deeply important parable, as giving us still further insight into the work of the true disciple of the Lord Jesus.

"*A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the mor-*

row, when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him, and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. Which, now, of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that showed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise."—Luke x. 30–37.

This parable was delivered by our Lord in reply to a question put to him by a certain lawyer. What this man's motives may have been in standing up and tempting Christ, by asking him, "Master what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" it is unnecessary for us to inquire. Our Lord referred him to his own law. "How readest thou" there? He replied, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself." He had thus answered his own question. For there is no entrance into life, or inheritance in heaven for an unloving spirit. Whatever be the means by which that love to God and man are to be produced, one thing is clear, that unless they do exist, there can be no eternal life; for "God is love," and to love God is to live. The lawyer, however, "willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbor?" The parable before us is the reply. It will at once be observed that the reply given, however, is indirect; and yet, on that very account, it is all the more forcible. Thus the question is "Who is my neighbor?" while the parable drives the questioner to the consideration, "Who is it to whom you should not show a neighborly love and kindness?" The lawyer wished to draw off the point of conversation from himself, and turn it upon a mere generality; our Lord brings it back upon himself with all the force of individual application. "Who, then, thinkest thou, *was neighbor* to him who fell among thieves?" And when the lawyer could not but reply, "He that showed mercy on him," then did our Lord close the conversation by a direct appeal to the man himself, "Go thou and do likewise." You ask, Who is your neighbor? Go and look around on all the sons and daughters of sorrow and affliction; behold on every side, those who have an immediate and urgent claim upon your love and pity—go without delay and show mercy, and thus prove yourself a neighbor to every man that needs your help.

Trench has some very striking remarks on the mode which our

Lord adopted in his reply to the lawyer. "He who asked, 'whom shall I love,' proved that he understood not what that love meant of which he spake; for he wished to lay down beforehand how much he was to do, and where he should be at liberty to stop—who had a claim and who had not upon his love; thus proving that he knew little of that love whose essence is that it has no limit, except in its own inability to proceed further, that it receives a law only from itself, that it is a debt which we must be content to be always paying, and not the less still to owe. (Romans xiii. 8.) Especially wonderful is the reply which our blessed Saviour makes to him, wonderful, that is, in its adaptation to the need of him to whom it was addressed, leading him, as it does, to take off his eye from the object to which love is to be shown, and to throw it back inward upon him who is to show the love; for this is the key to the parable, and with this aim it was spoken."—(Notes on the Parables, p. 306.)

The great scope of the parable, then, is to illustrate a very important feature in the *Law of love*, to set forth an essential part of that "labor of love" which is required at the hands of every true disciple. It has been said that while the imagery of the parable is directed toward this object, and has this aim, yet at the same time, it is meant to be symbolical of the great work of the Son of God himself, in coming down from heaven to bind up the wounds of the sinner, to save him from death, to do for him what others would not, and could not do, and never ceasing in his love, compassion, and care for him, until he restored him "safe and sound" to his home. This has given rise to many ingenious efforts, both in ancient and modern times, to explain the allegorical allusions of the different parts of the parable. These are on the whole not very satisfactory. Perhaps it is better to regard the story in the parable as being simply uttered by our Lord with reference to what was immediately the topic of conversation, and with the intent of leaving to all his people a solemn lesson of their duty and their privilege, in showing pity and mercy to every one who needs them. But, then, as the very highest and most glorious pattern of such love and pity, we have the whole work of the Son of God himself set before us in his life, sufferings, and death for sinners; and so we need not wonder if the story given to inculcate compassion and love in the disciple, bears throughout, in its general

features, a striking resemblance to that perfect love which has been manifested by the disciple's Master.

The circumstances in the story are very striking. A traveler in going down from the metropolis to Jericho is attacked by *robbers*—not merely thieves, but by men whose trade it is to take life with as little compunction as they take money. He is left by the road-side, stripped, wounded, and expiring. This is not done in a retired spot. It is on the public road where there is much traffic, and so the matter can not long be concealed. A priest approaches in the same direction, probably returning from Jerusalem after having fulfilled his course. He sees the wounded man, but "*he passes by on the other side.*" Next comes a Levite. He does more than the first. "*He looked on him;*" and then he also went his way, passing by on the other side. Hardly had he departed, when "*by coincidence,*" not *chance*, in our use of the word, but according to that *concurrency* of events which are so often to be seen distinguishing the acts of God's providence, a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, "*came where he was.*" How affectingly is the conduct of this "stranger," described in contrast to that of the priest and Levite. Whatever might have been the excuse these two men made for their neglect, he might have pleaded the same; while there was the traditionary enmity between the Jews and the Samaritans which he might have pleaded over and above. But, on the contrary, as soon as he drew near, and *saw* him, he had *compassion* on him, he *went to him*, he *bound up his wounds* with his own hand, he set him on his own beast, and brought him to a place of safety. Even there his compassion did not rest. He took care of him, and charged himself with any expense which might be incurred during his recovery from his wounds. We must not omit to notice the additional force which our Lord gave to the lesson he was teaching, by selecting a Samaritan, though he himself was a Jew, as affording so bright an example of compassionate love.

And here then, in this full teaching of our divine Master, we have strongly inculcated upon us, as an active duty, not a passive emotion, the love of compassion and benevolence toward every one that stands in need of the exercise of such love; while this urgent duty is made more impressive by the failure of others on this very point. In the parable of the two debtors, we have en-

forced the love of gratitude to Christ, not reposing within the breast that feels it, but actively engaged either toward Christ personally, when he was in the world, or to those of his household for his sake, since he has gone away. The love here enforced takes a wider range than this. It looks on the world, and diligently inquires after every one that needs its help; and thus rests not till it has lavished its treasures of mercy and compassion on the needy. It is not satisfied with merely asking whether there be any of the "household of faith" which it can benefit by its exertion or its self-denial, but it seeks for "opportunity to do good unto all men." These emotions and their exercises though kindred are yet distinct. The love of gratitude to Christ is one which looks up. The love of compassion is that which gazes down. The love of gratitude shows itself in what John so constantly enforces in his epistles, "love to the brethren," because each brother reflects the image of him whom the soul *loves.* The love of compassion shows itself toward those who are without—who are not in such favorable circumstances as we are—who stand in need of our help, and to whom we must go—whom we must seek out, by the wayside of this pilgrimage, in order to help. The love of gratitude sympathizes. The love of compassion pities.

And so here we have the true disciple of Christ who has looked well to his foundation that is laid on the rock, and begun his building by the precious stones of active "love to the brotherhood" for Christ's sake, earnestly warned to "*go and do* likewise," as this kind, and generous, and self-denying Samaritan did. He must see that he labors with *this* love also.

It is instructive to note how one and the same evil-working of the human mind makes itself seen and known from time to time under different forms. Thus, when Cain said, contemptuously, "Am I my brother's keeper?" he but expressed in strong and repulsive language the very sentiment which the lawyer clothed in a more plausible guise when he asked, "And who is my neighbor?" Both questions indicate the rupture which sin has made between the heart of man and the objects of its love, compassion, and care. And though we may not hear now such language used, or such questions in so many words asked, yet is the spirit which pervades them both widespread and general. The feeling which led the lawyer to ask the question he did, is presented be-

fore us in the parable by the conduct of the priest and the Levite. They acted that principle out. Their conduct was a practical demonstration that they did not know who was their neighbor—in other words, that they did not know themselves, and what *they owed* to every one in need whom they could by their exertions or their assistance help. And so also we find large numbers of persons practically exemplifying in their conduct now what these men did long ago.

And is the question asked, What *kind* of need is it that demands compassion and help from the disciple? The answer is very simple—"*All* kinds." *Wherever* there is any one of the human race in need that we *can* help, there is our neighbor, and we must see that we do a neighbor's work by him. *Whatever* be his need, if we have wherewith to help him, we have no love to our neighbor if we withhold it. And thus we have in this parable two grand objects of compassionate love inculcated on the true disciple of Jesus. Wherever throughout the wide world he sees any human creature suffering temporal distress which he has it in his power to relieve, he must take heed that he pass not by it. And wherever through the wide world he beholds his fellow-creature suffering under the greater and more appalling calamity of spiritual distress, bleeding and dying of the wounds inflicted by sin, asking, as it were, in piteous wailing, whether no man will care for his soul, there, too, he must give good heed that he be like the Samaritan, stranger as he was, rather than as the priest and the Levite, who, by their wicked neglect, trampled on the union which binds all mankind in a common brotherhood for mutual kindness, benevolence, and charity.

Surely this parable speaks with solemn and weighty condemnation against those who, under the meager and flimsy pretext of spending their energies on the spiritual necessities of those at home, refuse to recognize the claims of the poor dying heathen who appeal to them day by day for help in their terrible desolation. The very language of the parable is significant in its reproof of such. The excuse so often heard for looking coldly on the poor heathen, and passing by on the other side, is just this, "I must attend to my *neighbor* first—to him who is at my very door." Why, the very excuse proves that they who make it know not who their neighbor is, and what it is to have a

neighborly spirit. The priest and the Levite could, doubtless, comfort themselves by thinking, as they wickedly passed by the wounded man, that there were others more immediately dependent on them, as they chose to think, to whom they would gladly do a neighbor's part. But he who was *in the way* was their neighbor, and they had no right to "*pass by*" him. And so also, if God in his providence gives us opportunities now, and, as it were, places before our eyes and within reach of our help, the poor, ignorant, perishing heathen, and we pass them by with the poor excuse that *our* neighbors are nearer home, we may rest assured that our unloving, unbrotherly, unneighborly conduct is condemned in the courts of heaven, and if these hapless ones perish, their blood will be required at our hands.

And they who urge these base and selfish excuses for withholding help, if it can be given, to "every creature" under heaven who needs it, do so in direct antagonism to the law of love so beautifully characterized in the above extract from Trench. They look out for limits to that which ought to have no bounds. They are narrowing the circle that they may know where to stop, instead of suffering their love to feed upon its own blessed exercise, and to become continually more expansive in the power of its operation, even as it becomes every day more fully alive to the objects of its blessed and tender compassion. They do not perceive, also, that if they admit such a principle as this, there is virtually an end to every thing like large-heartedness of love, or even the earnest exercise of a puny, meager, worldly philanthropy. If one man finds a neighbor only within a certain limit, another will make that limit less, until, in fact, the charity of those who frown down all kind, loving, and compassionate effort to go forth to every creature and preach Jesus to them ere they die, will resolve itself into the meanest self-love, and the determination just to do as much good for others as is agreeable and suitable to ourselves.

A modern philosopher, who has sought to give the tone to morals, while he despises the simplicity of the Gospel, and whose talents have, alas! given him too many disciples, shows plainly enough where the charity of so-called Christian people would lead them, when they narrow the limits within which their compassion and benevolence are to be brought into play. Trench,

in referring to the opinions of this writer, thus prefaces an extract from them—"It is striking to see the question of the narrow-hearted scribe, 'Who is my neighbor?' reappearing in one with whom we would think that he had little in common. I make this extract from Emerson's *Essays*, (Ess. 2,)—'Do not tell me, as a good man did to-day, of my obligation to put all poor men in good situations. Are they *my* poor? I tell thee, thou foolish philanthropist, that I grudge the dollar, the dime, the cent, I give *to such men as do not belong to me, and to whom I do not belong.* There is a class of persons to whom, by all spiritual affinity, I am bought and sold—for them I will go to prison, if need be; but your miscellaneous popular charities, &c.'"—(Notes on the Parables, p. 306.) What a humiliating picture of selfish, hollow-hearted, would-be philanthropy! Not content, like the priest and Levite, with passing by, but glorying in his shame. And we may well say to those who love to worship at such shrines as these, "Behold thy gods, O Israel!"

We can not but glance at the conduct of our blessed Lord on one occasion as being very instructive in the contrast it presents to the low standard of love which many would set up in his name. When the *Gentile* woman came to him, he did indeed say to her, as he replied to her urgent request, "Let the children first be filled; for it is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs." And such is very much the language of many professed followers of Jesus now, when asked to help the heathen who cry aloud to them for help. But with what a different meaning and purpose! They speak thus, because they mean to act upon what they say. Our Lord uttered these words only to try the faith of the poor woman for the moment, in order that the blessing he had in store might be all the more richly lavished upon her. With him it was but the prelude to unutterable mercy, "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt;" and so he bound up her wounds and took care of her. With them it is the unmerciful reply of those who mean to show no mercy. Oh, that his Spirit may be given largely to those who bear his name, that they be not only like the good Samaritan, but like Jesus himself; that all who profess to follow him may feel so deeply what he has done in rescuing the poor bleeding soul from death and hell, and restoring it to life and heaven, as to be unable to restrain

their compassion from going forth to every child of Adam to whom they can offer the balm of Gilead, and tell of the skill of the great Physician—to whom they can whisper the story of peace which will give light to the eye, and joy to the heart, and dispel every cloud of pain and sorrow forever. Strange it would have been, if the returned prodigal had not poured forth the tenderness of a child's love under his father's roof—strange if he had not gladly sought out such prodigals as himself in the land of spiritual famine and death, and besought them, as one who himself had obtained mercy, to "arise and go to their Father." And strange indeed, then, if the true disciple does not manifest this special work in his life and conduct, to carry the lamp of life to those who are in darkness, and thus adorn as well as strengthen the house he is building on the rock Christ.

CHAPTER V.

THE UNFORGIVING SERVANT—THE LABORERS IN THE VINEYARD.

We now turn to another parable, which furnishes us with another feature, which ought to characterize the conduct of the true disciple of Christ.

"*Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, until seven times; but, until seventy times seven. Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. And when he begun to reckon, one was brought unto him which owed him ten thousand talents: but forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant, therefore, fell down, and worshiped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the Lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow-servants, which owed him an hundred pence; and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. And his fellow-servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not; but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. So when his fellow-servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts*

forgive not every one his brother their trespasses."—Matthew xviii. 21–35.

The story in this parable is oriental rather than Jewish in its structure. The servants spoken of in it are not household slaves, who might be regarded as the property of their master, but persons in offices of trust and confidence under a king, who, at the same time, exercised despotic authority over them, and all that they possessed. "The servants here are not *slaves,* but ministers or stewards. In oriental language, all the subjects of the king, even the ministers of state, are called *servants.* The individual example is one in *high trust,* or his debt could never reach the enormous sum mentioned—ten thousand talents is the sum at which Haman reckons the revenue derivable from the destruction of the whole Jewish people." (Alford.)

The "*reckoning*" in this parable must not be regarded as representing the final reckoning by our heavenly King with his servants. It is perfectly distinct from such a taking account of his servants as is set forth in the parables of the talents or the pounds, in that of the ten virgins, the sheep and the goats, and the marriage-supper. The reckoning here must have reference to something *before* the day of probation closes, not when that is past forever. Certain results of this primary reckoning are taken into account before the king deals finally with his unforgiving servant. It is indeed just such a taking account as is represented in the parable of the barren fig-tree when the owner comes and makes a certain investigation, but does not yet close the season of grace—the day of salvation.

There can be no doubt as to the meaning of the enormous debt which the servant, with whom the king reckons, is found to owe to his master. It is manifestly intended to represent the great debt which every sinner owes to the justice of God. And just as it is said of the servant here, that "*he had nothing to pay,*" so it is true of the sinner. It is not that he is just short of the whole sum by which he might clear his account with God—but he has absolutely nothing which can in the least pass current in such a settlement as God requires in the affairs of his soul. And thus, by this spiritual bankruptcy, he has fallen into the hands of the living God, and exposed himself to the whole penalty due to his misdeeds.

So far there is no difficulty in the explanation of the parable. Here, however, we are met by the inquiry, "Who is meant by this servant? Is he meant to represent a true child of God, or not?" The answer to this question manifestly involves issues of the greatest magnitude. If we adopt the first of these views, we are driven to the conclusion that one who has been brought from darkness to light—from Satan's power to the kingdom of Christ—may again be banished to outer darkness, and separated from Christ forever. If we adopt the last, then the difficulty occurs, "How is it, then, that he is said to be forgiven?"

The first of these views will be regarded very differently, according as persons regard the analogy of the faith. They who believe that a sinner who has become a child of God and an heir of heaven, may again become a child of Satan and an heir of hell, will be disposed to look on this parable as illustrating their opinion of the testimony of Scripture. But let such take heed that they really have received, in simple faith, the teachings of Scripture in this matter, before they at once close with this view of the parable. They must take care not to derive their view from the parable, but only to confirm and establish by illustration the view they have obtained elsewhere. Now, it does appear as if Scripture testimony were directly opposed to such a doctrine as that just stated. It would be impossible to enter on the discussion of this subject at any length here, and, therefore, a very general statement is all that can be made.

Some of those solemn warnings in Scripture, which seem at first sight to support this view, can not do so in reality, unless pressed beyond their legitimate bearing. Thus when Paul says, "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest when I have preached to others, I myself shall be a cast-away," it is undoubtedly true, that if he had, by his conduct and life, denied Christ, Christ would also at length deny him; but then this very denial by Christ of his professing servant, would only at length prove and show openly that Paul had never been one of his. If Paul should turn out to be a barren tree, he would be cut down and cast out of the vineyard, doubtless, but then this would show infallibly that he had "lied unto God," when he said, "the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who hath loved me, and given himself for me."

And so of the case of Judas, enlightened as he was—tasting as he did much of the good word of God and the powers of the world to come, yet when he fell away, he only proved that he had been very near the kingdom, but not in it—almost, but not altogether a disciple; and to him the words of the Apostle emphatically apply: "They went out from us, but they were not *of us;* for if they had been *of us,* they would, no doubt, have continued with us; but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all *of us.*" (John ii. 19.) The truth is, as long as this day of probation lasts, no man has a right to assume of another that whatever be the outward manifestation, he must infallibly be found to be a true child of God at the last. No man has any right to presume that he himself has, as it were, seen his own name written in the book of life. All that we are entitled to say of others, or of ourselves *here* is, that as long as genuine fruit appears to us to be produced, there is the evidence of being not only *with* Christ, but *of* Christ; but if these fruits are not, then equally there is the evidence that we are none of his, and never have been. The day of the Lord will alone display the real state of the case in each heart, and hence the importance of all the solemn warnings, which, under such circumstances, must of necessity, if they would have any force at all, take such a form as *apparently,* but only apparently as we have seen, to imply the possible falling away of a true child of God from that to which he had already, through grace, attained.

On the other hand, consider the exceeding fullness and preciousness of Scripture testimony as to the real and final security of all who are truly *of* Christ. "None shall pluck them (my sheep) out of my hands"—"none shall pluck them out of my Father's hands." In this special purpose of preserving my sheep, (and if *one* were snatched away, *could* such language be used?) "I and my Father are one." Then they are the gift of the Father to the Son—"Thou gavest them me." A fall here of the child not only implies a weakness on his part, but, with all reverence be it said, a weakness on the part of him who speaks of his child in such terms. And herein lies the unspeakable difficulty against receiving such a doctrine as that under review. It is quite possible to conceive one such as Adam falling. Another, and still another, like him in his original innocence, might be created, and they, too,

might fall. But the fall of a converted soul from God is a widely different matter. He is not merely a creature, but a *new* creature, and that, too, in Christ Jesus. He is born again of the Spirit, and so becomes spiritually alive. He has actually been snatched as a brand from the burning. He has been taken out of the family of Adam and brought within the family of God. He is delivered from the power of Satan, and owns happily and thankfully the sway of Jesus. To suppose, then, that when all this has truly taken place—when all this has really passed—when it has been positively and absolutely *done*, and not merely in name and by profession—to suppose that such a soul, under these circumstances, can at length fall away and be lost, is in reality to give Satan a triumph over Christ, to make man's salvation, as of merit, depend on something else than the free grace and sovereign power of Jehovah, and utterly to destroy the meaning of that grand and glorious antithesis of the Apostle, "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." Such a supposition would throw doubt and discredit on all the great and precious promises of God, who, when he begins, will not tarry till he perfects his good work in his people. It would make some of the most blessed portions of God's word meaningless and vapid; it would force us to conclude that, when our Lord says, "there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth," such joy might possibly be a mistaken joy, and the return of the lost one be only the prelude to a greater loss than ever, and a deeper dishonor cast upon the great King. Nay, more, it would lead us further to question the propriety of the Father's joy when the prodigal returned, and to think it ill-timed, and as regards the thing illustrated, deceptive, if after the robe, and the ring, and the sandals were given, even the fatted calf killed, and the whole household assembled to give utterance to the general joy—if after the kiss of reconciliation, and the tender embrace of a kind and loving Father, all this was but to herald a deeper dishonor than ever to this forgiving parent, and only be the prelude to his losing more by the second departure of his son than he did by the first. We can not, then, admit that Scripture teaches such a doctrine as this. Scripture warns solemnly in this matter, lest there be deception practiced on ourselves or on others regarding the real condition of our souls, but it guards with equal jealousy that precious truth

which forms the concluding petition of our gracious Master's loving prayer, and which must remain *un*answered, if ever *one* of the "called, and chosen, and faithful," fall away again into the ranks of the faithless and the lost. "*I will* that they *whom thou hast given me*, be *with me where I am*, that *they may behold my glory*."

But when we turn to the parable which has necessarily suggested these reflections, a little examination will satisfy us that the description given of the servant who owed the ten thousand talents can not with any propriety be said to apply to a true child of God. Note the manner in which the king proceeds to take account of him. First of all the very aspect of the king is not like that which the Father of Mercies assumes toward the child whom he receives. He goes "*to reckon*" with his servants. He is aware that something is wrong, and a frown is on his brow as he "*takes account*" of the actual state of matters. Very different this from the loving father pitying his wayward but now penitent child. It might stand for a picture of God going down to take account of Sodom and Gomorrah, not of Him as he met face to face with the robber on the tree. Again, it is said, "*one was* BROUGHT *unto him which owed*." Mark that word, "*brought* unto him." It was a seizure of this debtor. It was no willing act on the part of this servant. This "*reckoning*" was any thing but a voluntary thing with him. He sought it not. This settlement only troubled his soul. He had no desire to face his creditor. What a perfect contrast to the case of real genuine repentance as given in the parable of the prodigal son. The prodigal comes to himself. He says, "I will arise and go to my father." He it is that must needs go and pour out the acknowledgment of the great debt he can never pay. He it is that seeks out his Father, resolved that nothing shall prevent him from having this matter between them settled at once. He has forfeited every thing. He is a pauper and in rags. He has nothing wherewith to pay back what he took away from his Father at the first; but just as he is he must go; and he will lie at his Father's feet until he knows the worst. Any thing is better than living away with the grievous debt pressing on him. *This* is manifestly heart-work in one rising up earnestly to settle with God; but the wretched servant in this parable had none of this. He is ignominiously dragged

as a prisoner, all unwillingly, to the presence of a severe judge. Then further, mark his plea—"*Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.*" Is this the language of real genuine conversion? Can this be the portrait of one over whose soul, before God, there has passed that solemn and precious moment, in which the dead has lived, and the lost been found? Impossible. Such words as these prove nothing but utter blindness to the actual nature and extent of his liabilities, and of his utter incapacity to meet them, in him who is represented by this servant. "I am not worthy" is the genuine cry. "Poor and miserable, blind and naked," is the genuine conviction. But this before us in the parable is the very image of blind ignorance, unbelief, and presumption, as to what sin is, the guilt of the sinner, and the holiness and justice of God.

We hold, then, that apart altogether from the dogmatic statements we have briefly adverted to, the description in this parable is wholly inapplicable to the case of a true disciple and child of God. And that, be it observed, not in consequence of the unforgiving spirit manifested at length by the servant, but by the primary description of his case when his lord first reckoned with him. We do not conclude thus from what is said of him in his lapsed condition, but from what is said of him as he first appeared in the presence of the king.

This servant, then, does not represent any who are of the true "Israel of God," but some who belong to the outward communion of his people. This man in the household is just to be regarded in a similar light as the barren fig-tree in the vineyard. The actual condition represented by these two figures is the same—not *of* Christ, but *with* Christ. In both is represented a trial given for a set purpose. In both is intimated the dread result if that trial prove unsatisfactory.

The question of Peter to our Lord in the twenty-first verse originated this parable. The apostle, by his question, proved that he needed instruction in the great duty of forgiveness. And our Lord deals with him accordingly. Peter asked how often he was to forgive his brother. Our Lord first of all replied to the effect that no limit was to be placed to such acts. In accordance with his language elsewhere, he wished to impress on the mind of his disciple, that *as often* as an offending brother *asked* forgiveness, so often

there should be a ready and frank exercise of this spirit. But he taught him more than this by the parable. Peter was obviously too much taken up with the mere number of *times* in which it was expected that he should forgive his offending brother. Our Lord by this parable urges, not, as some have superficially observed, the *bare* duty of forgiveness, and have thus lost sight of the real scope and bearing of the parable, but the "*forgiving from* THE HEART." This is the great *point* in it. "*So likewise shall my heavenly Father do unto you, if ye* FROM YOUR HEARTS *forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.*"

And what, then, does the parable tell us of the servant who forgave not? Why, just this. It tells us he had not "*the heart*" to forgive. The story is most instructive as to this. First, the miserable sum in which his fellow-servant was indebted to him. How heartless to persecute him for that! Then see how he does it: "*He laid hands on him, and took him by the throat.*" It is the conduct of a harsh, heartless bully; and all this, too, just when his lord had remitted such a debt on his part! Nothing can more significantly point to the main feature in the parable than these things. It is not merely a description of one who forgives not, but his utter want of heart in not forgiving. And what, then, in other words, is this but saying that he was thoroughly insensible of the benefit his master had conferred on himself? His debt was remitted, but as regards the real value of this remission, he was willfully and stupidly unconscious. The mercy of the king had not reached his frozen heart, or brought forth one gentle, loving, forbearing thought there.

Now, God is ever "reckoning" as in this parable, with merely nominal believers, or professed servants, when from time to time he confronts them with some trial, or some pressure of Providence, arresting them, as it were—demanding from them an account of what they owe, and filling them with alarm and dread. They *plead*, and they plead, it may be, heartily, for it is for mercy to themselves. Such an one may be stretched on a bed of sickness, and may cry mightily indeed for deliverance—may implore with a reality he never did before to be forgiven, and at the same time mingle with his cries of terror the utterance of his own ignorance. He may supplicate for patience, and make loud promises to pay in future. And God listens and raises him up again. He goes

forth once more—his conduct *now* will prove whether he has really taken what God has freely offered, *forgiveness*, full, frank, and free. If he had done so, his heart would move within him as it never did before; and the precious outgoings of its new and changed nature would be seen on every side. But he has *not* done so, and he quickly shows it by such heartless conduct as gives the lie to his profession that he has accepted of a gift such as God is willing to bestow, when he says, "Come, now, let us reason together; though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be white as snow, though red as crimson, they shall be as wool." (Isaiah i. 18.) The gift offered has not been received, for his heart's insensibility proves that he knows nothing about it—its inestimable value—its incalculable benefit. That gift has, indeed, been freely and graciously offered; but it has been only nominally accepted, and really rejected; so that, not by any withdrawal of mercy on the part of God, but by spurning of mercy on the part of man, the original debt remains in full force between the servant and his Lord; and he who despised mercy must face judgment. And what, then, can better illustrate this than the case of this servant, whose conduct proved that he was utterly insensible to the actual transaction between him and his king; so that after all he spurned in reality the gift that king offered. He thought only of the talents of gold, the outward expression of forgiveness, and he was willing and ready enough to take that. He gave not a moment's thought to the inner love of reconciliation offered—such a thing never glanced across his mind, nor gave him a moment's uneasiness—it never caused him shame for the past, nor created a desire for a new heart for the future. And so he left *that* offer in his king's presence. There it was at his feet, but he heeded it not; he "*went out*" despising the gift, and so no wonder that the gold and the silver did not help him to forgive his fellow.

And thus Peter was answered fully—"Forgive your brother as often as he turns and says, 'I repent.'" The number of times you have to do this will cause you no difficulty when you drink deeply into the forgiveness of your heavenly Father to you. If you know *not* what this forgiveness is, you can have no *heart*-forgiveness toward your brother; and your heavenly Father will at length withdraw the gift now offered by him, but despised by

you. But if you do, and the more you think of it and ponder over it the better, then you will find no difficulty in the exercise of such a spirit. On the contrary, it will be a source of delight and pleasure to you, "to be merciful even as your Father which is in Heaven is merciful."

Such, then, is the spirit and such the conduct we might expect from the penitent and restored prodigal. Such will every true penitent desire to possess and to exhibit. And such, then, is another and most important part of the true disciple's work. He must lay these precious stones in his building on the rock Christ. Forgiveness in heart, forgiveness by word and deed; because God also, for Christ's sake, has forgiven him. Both emotion and act must be united here. Without the act, this stone would not be shaped or fitted to its place—without the emotion, it would not be a "lively stone."

And here, as having no remote connection with what has just been under notice, we turn to another remarkable parable of Jesus:—

"*For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the laborers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the market-place, and said unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way. Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive. So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the laborers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny. And when they had received it, they murmured against the goodman of the house, saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day. But he answered one of them, and said, Friend,*

I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny? Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good? So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen."—Matt. xx. 1–16.

Although the apostles and ministers of Christ are in a special sense "*laborers*" in God's vineyard, yet this parable must not be restricted within such a limit in its application. Every believer has a work to do in the vineyard, and the whole body of workmen are here represented. The different times at which the laborers were sent into the vineyard must not be set down to any particular period, either in the history of the Jewish Church or of the Christian. Nor, on the other hand, must a reference to such early and late periods of the history of the Church of God of all ages and every country be lost sight of, by confining the application to the early or late periods in each man's life when called to labor in the vineyard. Rather the very common practice of hiring at certain stated hours in the day, as mentioned in the parable, must be taken as meaning that God does at "sundry times," as well as in "divers manners," speak to people and call them to work for him. Some are called early in the day of grace —others in the latter part of that day. Some are called early in their own day of probation—others are called when the shadows of that day are beginning to fall on them.

But who are the laborers? Now, just as in the parable of the unforgiving servant, we have seen that the very description requires us to look on that servant as by no means representing a truly converted, penitent, and believing child of God, so here the careful and emphatic language of the parable shuts us up to the necessity of regarding the laborers in the vineyard as the true, faithful people of God.

In proof of this, consider the following:—When we first meet with the laborers in the parable, they are idle in the market-place. In the crowded, bustling place of business, these men were unoccupied. The householder knew where to seek for laborers; and, as often as he chose to go to the market-place, there he ever found men "*standing idle.*" He calls them and sends them into his vineyard; and, accordingly, one band after another go and do as he bids them. Surely by putting this along side of that other para-

ble, wherein the father bids his sons go work in the vineyard, and the first at length went; and when our Lord tells us, that in so doing he did the will of his father, and represented those who were entering into the kingdom of Heaven, we can not but conclude that the "*laborers*" here truly represent those who repent and believe, and "do works meet for repentance;" we can not but regard them as being among the real servants of God, seeing they not only are bidden to go, but actually *do* go into the vineyard, and that when there, they are no longer what they were before—"*idle*," but actively engaged in the duty and the sphere marked out for them by their heavenly Father who hath called them. And this becomes still more manifest when we consider the case of those who are said in the parable to "*murmur*," for if there can be a shadow of doubt thrown on the characters here represented as being true children of God, it arises from thence. And yet it is specially by them that it is said and admitted also by the householder, "*they bore the burden and heat of the day.*" Such language would be altogether unintelligible if applied to those who were not *true* disciples: nor is it to be overlooked that it is specially with regard to those *first* hired, and who then murmured when they received their wages, that in the parable we are told that the householder "*agreed with them;*" very significantly pointing to the covenant of grace, mercy, and peace, not only offered *to*, but accepted *by* those who are the "faithful followers of the Lamb."

And besides all this, there is the payment of the laborers at the close of the day's labor. No one is questioned as if he had left his work undone—no one is condemned for having proved himself by his conduct to be disqualified to receive his wages. On the contrary, the fidelity of each to his engagement is tacitly acknowledged, and each one receives the sum of money which was agreed on. This can only represent the case of those who are not cast out, but received, and everlasting favor conferred upon them by him who has called them into his kingdom, and who "giveth to every man according to his work." Nor is it uninteresting to observe how, by a single expression, our Lord seems at once to put aside the possible mistake, that the one party might represent true and faithful disciples, while the others do not; for, in replying to the murmurer and condemning his spirit, he at the same time, says of those murmured against, "*I will give*

unto these last even as UNTO THEE." He did not withhold from the one and give to the other; but even as he checked what was wrong, he made him who was first hired understand that what he was giving to the last was "*even as unto thee.*" If, then, the parable gives us in the case of "*the last,*" the representation of true believers at length receiving eternal life at the hands of God, then "*the first*" also must represent such too, for they likewise receive the same.

But then, how is it that truly righteous persons can be said to "*murmur*" against God? The difficulty in explaining the parable on this point has very greatly arisen from not observing and keeping steadily in view what it was that called it forth. The division of chapters in our version—arbitrary, though in many respects useful, as it is—has, in some cases, done much harm by dislocating parts of Scripture which can only be seen in their true light, or their full emphasis perceived when kept carefully together. The chapter in which this parable occurs is one of these. It ought never to have been severed from the preceding one, for it is there that we find the cause which led our Lord to utter the parable before us. A little attention will discover this cause. The young rich ruler had sorrowfully left our Lord because he had great possessions, which he could not bring himself to give up, even for the sake of following Jesus. Our Lord's observations on this sad picture of worldliness drew forth from Peter, who probably expressed the feeling which existed in the minds of his fellow-disciples, the question, "Lo we have forsaken *all*, and followed thee: what shall *we* have therefore?" The much or the little forsaken is altogether beside the mark here. Whether little or much, it is *all* which Peter and his brethren had given up in order to follow Christ. "What, then," he asks, "shall we have therefore?"

This question of Peter's indicated an under-current of feeling within his mind which was wrong, and needed warning and reproof. In the first place, he seemed to put himself and his brethren into a *favorable* comparison with the young ruler who had just left them. It was as much as to say, "*He* has gone, because he could not give up what he had for *thee!* But *we* have forsaken all and followed *thee!*—we have done what he would not—we have denied ourselves as he could not, and have

shown love to thee as he has not." It was, in fact, a glorifying of himself and what he had done, by an implied condemnation of this young man. But further, the spirit manifested in the question was specially wrong, by the very terms of that question itself—"What shall *we* have *therefore?*" As if by their leaving all and following Christ, they had put the latter under obligation to them, instead of receiving unspeakable mercy in being allowed to follow him at all—as if, in fact, it was to be expected, that by their "*bearing the burden and heat of the day*," they had acquired a special claim for some benefit by so doing, and he was anxious to know what that would be.

Our Lord's reply to the question is remarkable. In infinite condescension he at first passes over the unsanctified spirit which on that occasion led Peter to speak as he had done, and graciously sets before the Apostles a glorious prospect of coming glory for them. But then, immediately after, he adds, for the very purpose of checking the spirit which he marked, though Peter himself was probably ignorant of it at the time, "and *every one* (not you only who have entered first, but *every one*) that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life." And then he emphatically declares—"And many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first." Thus giving the key-word to the following parable, as after having uttered it, he thus applies it, "*So the last shall be first, and the first last.*"

The parable, then, was given for the purpose of warning his disciples against the indulgence of a spirit which they were in danger of fostering, but which he altogether condemned. This spirit of jealous dislike that others should be as favorably regarded as ourselves, because we think that they do not deserve it as well, is, alas! too often met with even among the followers of Jesus. We are all too ready in this matter, to "sacrifice to our own net, and burn incense to our own drag." We are all too prone to magnify our day of toil and labor, its burden and its heat, and to overlook the work of others, or at least to consider our own as in many respects much better. We would by no means deny *their* excellence, but we will not put it on a level with our own; and what is this but practically putting Peter's

question, "*What shall we have therefore?*" What is this but indulging in a spirit which feels aggrieved and sore, when it appears as if *we* were slighted, and others, whose work we esteem less than our own, are preferred before us. Now, the parable does not by any means require us to conclude that there will be any of God's servants at the *last*—at the *close* of the day of grace, or at the *end* of their own day of labor, who will really speak to the heavenly Householder in such terms as are here set forth; but our Lord does in this emphatic manner give us to understand the exceeding greatness of that evil thing which is working within even God's people now, and which they must by all means, and that without delay, seek to overcome. We must begin at once to discipline ourselves into entire acquiescence with this truth, that many who appear the least just now, may be seen to be the greatest when the day's work is done, and those who are the last and apparently far back in the actual entering on their labor, may stand the first in the final acknowledgment of the owner of the vineyard.

And all this is based on the one great and all-important truth which this parable inculcates, namely, that whatever the believer receives at last from God, is of *grace*, and not of *works*. It has been truly said, that its teaching is parallel with the first four verses of the fourth chapter of Romans. It is intended to urge on all God's disciples, that by the very terms of the covenant under which alone they stand before God, or are admitted to work at all in his vineyard, all boasting is excluded, as if they deserved any thing at his hands because of what they had done, or better than others who have labored at their side. It is to strike at the root of all such questioning "What shall we have *therefore?*" It is not because of any merit in themselves that they have been sent into the vineyard in the first instance, nor is it because of meritorious work when in it that they at length shall reap a full reward. The first is of grace, and the last is equally so. "*Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?*" truly sets forth the nature of all such transactions between God and his people. What he gives them is not *their* own, but *his* own. It is of his own sovereign grace and mercy that he bestows any thing on them which they have or hope to have. "*I will* give unto this last even as unto thee."

What is meant by this "gift" in the parable is admirably set forth by Alford. "This *gift* I believe, then, to be *eternal life*, or, in other words, GOD HIMSELF.—(John xvii. 3.) And this, rightly understood, will keep us from the error of supposing that the parable involves a declaration that all who are saved will be in absolute equality. *This gift is and will be to each man as he is prepared to receive it.*" Eternal life, God himself, his favor, his light, his glory, all that the great King and Creator can ever be to a creature, is the portion forever of those who are found at the evening faithful workmen in his vineyard. But "if the vision of God constitute the blessedness of the future world, then they whose spiritual eye is most enlightened, will drink in most of his glory." According to the enlargement of the vessel, "it will receive more amply of the Divine fullness;" and thus with the same reward at last to all, even as it was given to Abraham through faith long ago, "*I* am thine exceeding great reward," it shall still happen that "there are first which shall be last, and last first"—some by the very largeness of the capacity to receive and enjoy, shall be, as it were, before others who started in the race before them; and some who have "borne the burden and heat of the day," though not *less full*, yet according to the measure of their stature shall be as "*the last.*"

Our Lord adds, "For many are called, but few chosen," not as a further application of the special features of the parable, but as an important caution to be received regarding the whole matter at large to which the parable is directed. From each body of workmen going at once when called to work in the vineyard, it might have been inferred that all who heard the gospel invitation would obey it, and faithfully serve God as his chosen active servants. Our Lord corrects this notion by these words just quoted. It was necessary for the scope of the parable and its special bearing, that different groups should be found repairing at once, just as they were called, into the vineyard. All these before they begin their work are *called;* and as they are seen at their work, they prove themselves to be *chosen;* but there is a vast number beside of whom the parable takes no immediate cognizance, because they come not within its scope, who, though called and invited, yea, again and again entreated to go and work in the vineyard, yet love the wages of iniquity better, are

not found among the faithful servants of their heavenly Master, and so are destitute of that mark of grace which his own people manifest, as not only "called," but also "chosen and faithful."

And here, then, is another work of true discipleship, to be a faithful laborer, and that, too, in the place, and for the time appointed for our Divine Master. To bear any toil he lays upon us, and yet to know that after all the reward is not of works but of grace, and that the greatness and preciousness of that reward is the enjoyment of God's presence forever. And he, then, will the most readily and frankly forgive the errors of his fellow-servants who most deeply feels that he himself stands by grace, and not through his own merit; and these precious stones will ever appear side by side in the house of the wise builder—his conformity with his gracious Master in acts of forgiveness, and his dependence on that Master's grace, so to sanctify all he does as that it may be owned at last to be the true and faithful work of a chosen and beloved servant.

CHAPTER VI.

THE UNJUST STEWARD—THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS.

WE now pass on to another parable, which gives still farther insight into what is required of true discipleship—what is expected at the hands of a returned and converted prodigal.

"*And he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward. Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I can not dig; to beg I am ashamed. I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses. So he called every one of his lord's debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord? And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty. Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore. And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light. And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.*"—Luke xvi. 1–9.

In order fully to enter into that which this parable is designed to teach, we must bear in mind that it presents before us, from first to last, a finished picture of thorough worldliness. The facility with which the interpretation has been admitted, making the rich man to represent Jehovah, and the steward, each one of the human race who has received certain things in trust from Je-

hovah, at once perplexes the whole passage, and is altogether foreign to the purport of the parable.

The words with which our Lord draws the parable to a close before proceeding to the full application, ought to have prevented this view from being entertained. "The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light." Now this expression does not refer merely to the steward, nor yet to the debtors with whom he had conspired to defraud his master, but equally to that master himself, together with both these parties. The parable, in fact, portrays in lively colors before us a group of "the children of this world,"—it exhibits to us some marked features in their dealing with each other, and illustrates "their wisdom in their generation"—their shrewdness and cleverness in adapting their means and energies toward the end they have in view. Let us look at this group as they appear before us in the parable.

First of all, there is the "*rich man*" himself. Not here such a rich man as we observed in another parable, preparing to build new barns and storehouses, in the miserable hope of a future of peace, prosperity, and comfort—nor such a rich man as is set forth in the parable at the close of the chapter where this is found, who was "clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day," but a rich man who was careful of "*his goods*." He does not appear to be exceedingly anxious as to their increase, nor yet lavish and luxurious in their expenditure, but he takes good care not to lose sight of them. He is obliged to trust in others so far, but his is no blind confidence. He keeps his ears and his eyes open to all that concerns his affairs, and he will not be long before he detects what is wrong, nor will he lose time in punishing the wrong doer. He is, in fact, in the worldly sense of the term, a careful man, one who looks well after his own interests, and is not the less fond of "*his goods*" because he does not appear to be in such a hurry as some to increase them, or as others to spend them. Look at him when he discovers the fraudulent conduct of his steward. "*The Lord* (*His Lord*, it ought to be rendered, the lord of the steward) *commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely*." He did not commend him for his injustice. He turned him out of his office on that account; but as a man of the world he could not withhold from him commendation for his clev-

erness and shrewdness in the plan he had formed for his future provision and comfort. What is this but the very echo of what we hear continually amid the ranks of worldly men? Persons who will not defraud others, and who take good care not to be defrauded by others, and yet who can not refrain from admiring the "sharp practice" of the less scrupulous, and even at the very moment when they condemn dishonesty, and visit it with a heavy penalty, yet speak of the fraudulent person as a very clever though an unprincipled man.

Then, as to the second party in this group. He is not such as our Lord had spoken of, some little time before—"Who then is that *faithful* and *wise* steward?" He is a dishonest and cunning one. He goes on for some time using the opportunities he has of fraudulent conduct, and indulging himself at the expense of his master, but he manages to save appearances. When, however, he is detected, far from repenting of his former evil course, he takes advantage of the last moment, before he renders up his stewardship, to defraud still more, and to implicate others in his evil deeds, in order, if possible, to secure for himself such shelter and help at length as he will need. "*Sit down quickly*," he says to his lord's debtors—no time to be lost. If you do not change your bill now, you will never be able to do it afterward. If you do, I will take care in my reckoning that you are not exposed. He displays his tact and shrewdness in taking advantage of the very last moment he had at his disposal, and also by implicating others with him in his fraud.

Then, there are the debtors themselves—persons who will not strike out such a plan of fraud and crime as the steward does, but who are not on the whole unwilling to lend an ear to his suggestions; not as bold in dishonesty as the other, but equally greedy after the wages of iniquity, and content to connive at what is sinful, if, peradventure, they may themselves "suck thereout no small advantage."

Now, all these persons are "in their generation wiser than the children of light." They are not wiser in regard to what they *are*, because, by implication, they are children of darkness, but in *their way*—with the end they have before them—they show much more shrewdness and cleverness in their efforts to attain that end than the children of light. Are the latter as prudently careful

over what they possess as this rich man was over "*his goods?*" Are they as watchful as he, that none shall in any way rob or defraud them of these precious things which have been given to them? Are they as clear-sighted and watchful over their eternal interests as he was about his temporal? Are they, again, as quick and prompt to take advantage of every moment, in order to make provision for the time to come, as the steward was in regard to his future prospects in the world? Are they eagerly vigilant not to let slip any opportunity which may be improved in promoting "the things which belong to their everlasting peace?" Are they as ready to gather from the experience of others, from their foresight and decision, what may add to their own store of the riches of Christ, so that they may also out of that abundance be a means of blessing in return, as these debtors were in the pursuit of their earthly prosperity? Alas, no! In all these points they are put to shame by the people of the world. They have a glorious inheritance—the true riches—unsearchable riches—gold that perisheth not—a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, and yet there is no comparison between the zeal, and the care, and the wisdom, and the shrewdness with which they "lay up for themselves in store," and what those manifest who have set their heart upon the world, and have taken the things it offers as their treasure and chiefest good. The latter teach the people of God many a lesson which they would do well to profit by, in real earnestness, regarding the things on which they have severally set their hearts.

But, lest there should be any misapprehension regarding the imagery used in this parable—lest it might be supposed that he was doing more than merely drawing such an inference as that just given—lest it might for a moment be supposed that he was marking with his approval the conduct of the parties in the parable, our Lord proceeds to give his second application of it. "*And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.*" These men in the parable, were *not* doing this. They were wise in their generation, no doubt, but they had missed this *true* wisdom—they had not gained the secret of making the mammon of unrighteousness, the gold and the silver of the world, their friends. They had not acquired a real knowledge of the

character of these things. While they showed great sagacity in pursuing them, they were, nevertheless, ignorant of their real value. They knew well how to run eagerly after them. They knew not how to keep them. They could grasp them in their hands, but it was only to feel them pierce them with sorrow, or see them take wings and fly away as quickly as they came.

Now, our Lord's earnest advice to his disciples by means of this parable, was to take warning by those spoken of in it, and *not* to do as they are represented as doing. Their hearts were so set on the mammon of unrighteousness, that it became the prolific source of mutual enmity. It likewise became an enemy to them in their own bosom. Their care and love for the world filled them with anxieties and fears. The disciples of Jesus were to take heed that it was not so with them. They ought to "*make to themselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness.*" They were to use the world as not abusing it. They were to set its proper value on it, and keep it in its right place. They were not, with the means at their disposal, to provide for themselves "barns and storehouses," nor "purple and fine linen," and sumptuous fare. They were not to make use of them for the mere purposes of self-indulgence, and personal ease or comfort, but they were to make "*friends* of them"—they were to make such a use of all worldly things, as that these should not rise up in judgment against them at the last, and condemn them, but be an evidence in their favor that they sought to serve God with the very things which worldly men reserve for themselves. In other words, we are taught that a sanctified use of what is in itself worthless and perishing, will turn it into a friend. It will then be a witness for us and not against us; one or other of which it must be. It will speak in our favor before God—not as showing merit in us, but as proving the true work of grace within, that we have been led to consecrate every thing within our reach to God, instead of misspending it on ourselves.

And this receives still further force from what our Lord added, "No servant can serve two masters." The worldly man loves mammon and serves mammon, and, therefore, he is a slave who does what his master bids, while by this very choice of mammon, he is at enmity with God. But the true disciple has chosen God as his master, and thus he is not enslaved by the world, but, on the

contrary, he is above it, and by reason of this relationship with God, he can "make *friends* of the mammon of unrighteousness." To be at enmity with God is, in other words, to serve mammon. To serve God is, in other words, to turn the curse of mammon into a blessing—to extract sweetness out of bitterness—to change "the root of all evil" into a goodly plant—to turn a deadly enemy into a real friend.

"*That when ye fail*," proceeds our Lord, or rather more accurately, when it, (*i. e.*, the more money, the actual gold and silver, when we are beyond the power of using it any longer,) "when it fails, they (the friends made by *it*) may receive you into everlasting habitations." The evidences of your faithfulness in the mammon of unrighteousness will be produced at last in your favor, and though they will not open the way *for* you into your everlasting habitation, will, nevertheless, welcome you thither. "Your bread cast upon the waters will be found after many days." You will find that you have "laid up in store a good foundation against the time to come." The use you have made of earthly things will bear friendly testimony to you in Heaven, and the keeper of this friendly testimony will be none other than your Master himself—as it will also be none other than He who will at last declare and publish that testimony to the universe—"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, ye have done it unto me." This is "to make friends of the mammon of unrighteousness." This is the *friendly* welcome which they who do so shall receive at the last.*

And here, then, the disciple of Jesus is earnestly reminded that while he has given up the world, in order to follow Christ, he is still *in* the world, and has a great deal to do with the world.

* The following admirable note tends to show very clearly the connection between the above parable and the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth verses following, which present at first sight considerable difficulty. The three verses are "closely connected with the foregoing. The faithfulness in the least is the same as the prudence and shrewdness just spoken of; in the case of the children of light, they run up into one—who then is that *faithful* and *wise* steward? 'That which is least'='the unrighteous mammon'='that which is another man's'—*i. e.*, *the wealth of this present world*, which is not the Christian's own, nor his proper inheritance. The 'much'='the true riches,'='that which is your own,'=*the true riches of God's inheritance.* The *wealth* of this world is ἀλλότριον—'another's,' forfeited by sin—only put into our hands to try us, and to be rendered an account of."—*Alford.*

First, he is, by the example of worldly men, the shrewdness, diligence, care, and forethought which they exhibit in *their* pursuit, to be prudent, diligent, earnest, and active in *his*. He is to prove by all his words and works that he is as really in earnest on his side as they are on theirs. He is to learn a lesson from their worldly wisdom, and to put it into practice without their worldliness. And then, secondly, he is to extract true value out of "unrighteous mammon," he is to turn to the very best account the mere dross of this world—its gold and its silver—and so "provide himself bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, nor moth corrupteth." Thus will the wise builder fashion precious stones out of very unpromising material. Thus will the poor prodigal—himself restored—search the land wherein he had formerly dwelt, that he may bring the things he had once basely squandered, and lay them at his Father's feet.

We advance now to another parable closely connected with that just considered, delivered by our Lord on the same occasion, and evidently completing what was there illustrated in a very solemn and striking manner.

"*There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day; and there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried, and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you can not; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence. Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.*

Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, Father Abraham; but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."—Luke xvi. 19–31.

We are told by the Evangelist that the Pharisees, "who were covetous," on hearing the parable of the unjust steward, derided Jesus. And our Lord, then, in the parable now before us, gives a terrible illustration of the man who fails to "make unto himself friends of the mammon of unrighteousness."

We have here, first of all, a description of one of the "children of this world"—a rich man living in luxury and splendor. His clothing, his eating, and his drinking, all as sumptuous as carnal heart can desire. It is important, however, that we do not exaggerate the character here portrayed. There is nothing said of this man as implying any thing in his outward deportment or conduct but what might be "highly esteemed among men." He is not said to be dishonest, nor avaricious, nor yet a spendthrift. He spends his money freely, but not, as far as the story shows, with reckless extravagance. He might be regarded by others as one merely living handsomely according to his means. We have nothing hinted at, as if displaying a specially selfish character with reference to those in his own house. On the contrary, the simple notice of what he says near the close of the parable of his "five brethren," would rather lead us to regard the character intended to be represented as amiable and generous in the estimation of the world. And even as to the beggar at his gate, it is wrong to regard what is said of the latter, as if pointing to a marked and special contempt and neglect on the part of the rich man toward his poor afflicted neighbor. If the description of the beggar, "*full of sores*," refers to the plague of leprosy, as appears probable, then there was a legal necessity for his not being allowed to go farther than the gate of the house. And when likewise it is said of the poor man that he "*desired to be fed with the crumbs*," &c., it means that he *did* obtain his wish, that he "*looked for*" and "*willingly took*" it. He was laid at the gate, according to his wish, as the most convenient place where he could lie, and where he knew he would receive of the superfluities of the rich man's table. There is nothing to prevent the

supposition that the rich man gladly assented to this. In the latter part of the parable he recognizes Lazarus, and so we may gather that at least not unwillingly he knew of the daily relief which the poor beggar received at his gate. Nay, as he himself passed in and out, he may have bestowed kind words on the afflicted leper, even as he allowed him to be fed from his table.

To make this man out to be unamiable, uncharitable, cold, and contemptuous to the poor and the suffering, is not within the scope of the parable at all, or rather, it militates against its true bearing, and assuredly is not supported in the least degree by the words of the parable itself. But whence then his condemnation, according to the terrible description given at the close of the parable? Was it simply because he was rich? Far from it. No fair construction of the parable can ever admit of such a view. And it is not unworthy of passing remark, that, as if to prevent us for a moment harboring the thought, we have *Abraham* introduced as on the other side of the gulf, and yet he "was exceeding rich."

The real key to this man's character and the cause of his condemnation, is to be found in a single expression used by Abraham toward him, "*Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst* THY *good things.*" "What a weighty, precious word is this, 'THY,'" exclaims a modern commentator. It scatters to the winds the false deductions of De Wette and others, that the parable means, "Woe to the rich, but blessed are the poor." "THY *good things*," the things you have chosen as your portion—the things of earth, and time, and sense, in the enjoyment of which you lived contentedly and happily as *your* own. God put them into your hands as a steward to be taken care of and used for him; you have dishonestly seized and appropriated them to yourself, as if they were your own property. They have been *your good.* THY *good things!* How this, as formerly noted, binds several of these parables together! The prodigal son demanded the portion of "*goods* which falleth to ME." The rich fool made all preparation for preserving "HIS *goods*"—the "children of this world" contended with each other about what each wished to call "HIS *goods*," (verse 1,) and now here this rich man, instead of making friends of his riches, using them for God's glory, as a faithful and a wise steward, has just taken them as *his own;* thus *wasting* what did

not belong to him, spending it as he pleased, not as God required, until at length being called to give an account of his stewardship, he is found guilty and condemned.

And in the word "*receivedst*," as in the original, there is great emphasis. "It expresses the *receipt in full*—the exhaustion of all claim on. Those that were good things *to thee came to an end* in thy lifetime: there are no more of them." Whatever *can* be derived from the guilty use of the things of earth, apart from the giver, and in neglect of fidelity to him, had been received by this rich man. He had taken them as *his own*, and he received his reward. They gave him as much as they could, and then left him to perish. The rich man in this parable, then, is the representative of that large class of worldly persons who have "their portion in this life," who stand well in the estimation of those who judge according to the outward appearance, but who are altogether destitute of love to God, and blind to the solemn responsibility laid upon them, to use their possessions not for their own indulgence, but according to his will. They are persons who, with all their amiability, are deficient in every emotion of gratitude toward God—with all their integrity regarding their fellow-men, are dishonest in respect of their heavenly Master, and with all the deference they exhibit for the opinions and the wishes of the world, have none for the plain requirements of Jehovah.

Turn now to the other party introduced to our notice in this parable—the beggar. It is worthy of remark, that just as the character of the rich man is marked by a single expression such as we have noted, so it would appear that our Lord by a single word would convey to us the impression he desired regarding the poor man. This is the only one of his parables in which he introduces parties to us by *name*. We have, first, the beggar named *Lazarus;* and then *Abraham* is brought expressly before us, in the latter part of the parable. We may readily assume that our Lord had some special reason for this unusual addition to the general characteristic of his parables. When, therefore, he says the beggar was called Lazarus, (the Lord my help,) it is not too much to infer that he wished by this very name to give us this insight into his character, that he was one of the true Israel; that he belonged to those who trusted in the living God, who realized in his poverty and disease, that "man doth not live by bread alone, but by every

word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God;" that amid all that was so dreary and dark outwardly in his condition, he was a partaker of the blessedness of the man who "has the God of Jacob for *his help*, and whose hope is in the Lord his God."

We see then in him an entire and striking contrast to the other as regards outward things. The one is clothed in purple and fine linen—the other in rags. The one fares sumptuously—the other desires to be fed with the leavings of the rich man's table. The one reposes on his luxurious couch—the other is laid at the rich man's gate. And yet the contrast in the external condition is not more remarkable than that which exists when we look farther. The rich man takes all that he has as *his* good things—the poor man has *evil* things; but note, they are not *his* evil things, they are sent by his heavenly Father for a set purpose and a set time to prove and try him, and he has nothing further to do with them —they are as little his portion in reality as the good things which the rich man has belong to him. He knows it—the rich man does not. Again, the rich man trusts in what he has—the poor man trusts in God—takes what God sends him without murmuring—is thankful for crumbs, and suffers even the "dogs to lick his sores." And thus, while the one would ever find abundance of thorns in his bed of roses, the other would often forget the hardness of his outward lot by the gracious manifestations of his Father's love to him; realizing, it may be, as bright visions, as Jacob did when he had no softer pillow than a stone whereon to lay his head.

We come now to the turning-point in the parable. We have both these men strongly contrasted with each other in life—we have them both brought together for a moment, and but a moment, in *death*. "*The beggar died.*" "The rich man also died." "It is appointed unto *all* men once to die." Nothing but the mere act of death connects the two. Even its accompaniments were widely different in both cases. The rich man had a stately funeral. This was a fitting termination to a life whose main feature was the indulgence of the poor *body*. The beggar, too, was buried; but no *mention* is made of his burial here. His dust was precious in the sight of that God in whom he trusted, and in the resurrection-morning God will show how much he prizes the redeemed bodies of his saints; but the parable has only at this point to do with

what takes place among men; and so it merely leaves us to infer, that while the rich man was carried to the tomb with earthly pageantry and state, the poor diseased body of the beggar was hid out of sight in any obscure grave which the hand of charity might provide for it.

Now let us tarry for a moment at this point in the story. Let us place ourselves in imagination at the door of the rich man's house, when the band of hired mourners has passed away, as his body is borne to the grave. His place is empty now within the gorgeous halls he called his own. *That* tenant is gone forever. The place of poor Lazarus is empty too. There is the spot on which he rested his wearied aching limbs, and received his daily pittance from the rich man's table. *That* spot shall know him no more forever. Turn now from the things that are seen, and pause in solemn awe as he who has the keys of death and Hades draws aside with his own hand that dread veil which hides the things that are unseen and eternal. What bright spirit is that which, shining with heavenly radiance, is conducted by the angels to the abodes of bliss, where are Abraham, and all who have followed in the footsteps of his faith? It is Lazarus. "*He is carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom.*" Fadeless bloom, endless light, unbroken peace, are there, and all are his forever. But whence is that wail of anguish? Look across that terrible unfathomable gulf, and, as the eye becomes accustomed to the dread darkness resting there, behold him in this region of despair from whom this bitter cry has arisen. Can you recognize him? It is the *rich man.* He died. He was buried. He has "*lifted up his eyes*" in Hades, "*being in torment.*" *Now*, judgment and eternity are stern realities brought before him face to face. He sees now as he never did before. And from amid his desolation he beholds Abraham and Lazarus, but alas, both are "*afar off*," and so he cries with an exceeding great and bitter cry from the unutterable misery which has fallen upon him. Ah, if the rich man's couch is empty now, and the place at his gate also where the beggar was wont to lie —the region of bliss and the abode of misery have had each a place filled in them, and the contrast of time is as nothing in comparison of that in eternity—with this terrible change severally in the condition of the two, that "*now he* (Lazarus) *is comforted, and thou* (the rich man) *art tormented.*"

And here we must enter a protest against all those attempts which have been made to set aside a very important inference to be drawn from this part of the parable, by affirming that our Lord did not necessarily mean to convey to us any view of the actual condition of each soul at death, but merely based his parable on the Jewish notion that all true believers when they died were carried to Abraham's bosom. Such dealing with the parable is utterly indefensible. It is turning the parable into a fable, taking the illustration out of the region of reality, and so altogether destroying its force. The connection between a vine and its branches is a real not a fabulous thing. The office and work of a shepherd is not a fabulous thing. The obedience of some sons, and the profligacy of others is not a fabulous thing. The relationship between master and servant, husbandman and laborers, is not a fabulous thing. The losing of a sheep or a piece of money is not a fabulous thing. The fraudulent ways of the children of this world is not a fabulous thing. And so here, unless we would withdraw this parable from all the rest, and rob it of what distinguishes every one of them, we must conclude that our Lord has laid bare to us one of the most solemn, as it is one of the most startling truths connected with our present condition, namely, that death to the believer ushers him at once into endless felicity, and that to the impenitent, also, it brings him under the immediate pressure of everlasting despair. He teaches us here, that to the child of God to be "absent from the body is to be present with the Lord," while to the impenitent, to be dismissed from the body is but to "go to his own place," where "the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

See with what terrible distinctness all this is delineated in the parable. The rich man dies, is buried, and is "in *torment*." There is no waiting for the last day and its final judgment. The die is cast, and while the body is not yet returned to the grave, the spirit has joined those who like itself have chosen death rather than life. The whole pleading of this wretched man with Abraham implies that the day of grace for those he had left behind still lasted, and that the day of final judgment was still future. Then, just as this gives us the instantaneous plunging of the impenitent into misery at death, so also does it mark the hopelessness of *any* change after death. Not even a drop of water to be

found there. A "*great gulf*" between the righteous and the wicked, and that "FIXED," so that the passage from the one to the other is impossible on either side. When once the spirit has taken its flight from its earthly prison, the dread decree comes into force never to be relaxed—"He that is unjust, let him be unjust *still;* and he that is filthy, let him be filthy *still*: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous *still;* and he that is holy, let him be holy *still.*"

Then consider further what the parable intimates to us. The wretched man entreats that Lazarus be sent to his five brethren lest they also join him in the place of torment. Alas, as long as they are in this world the wicked find their greatest satisfaction in drawing others after them in their forgetfulness of God, and indulgence of themselves. It will be widely different in the world to come. Then every addition to the sad and guilty throng will plant an additional sting in the bosom of the lost. Increasing numbers will only increase their anguish; and if there can be a glimmer of hope at all where every thing is despair, it is only expressed in such terrible words as these, "*lest they also come into this place of torment.*"

But much light is thrown upon the whole truth intended to be illustrated here by the express mention of Abraham, and what he says to the rich man. Can there be any room for doubting the purpose of Jesus in singling out *Abraham* in the place of rest, and peace, and joy, as the one whom Lazarus joined? Both of these persons, the rich and the poor, were his children after the flesh—one only was his child according to the faith. Abraham himself in bliss is there specially as the "father of the faithful." He has, "through *faith* and patience, inherited the promises;" and so, when Lazarus joins this "friend of God," we are unmistakably informed that he has reached that happy abode, not by works—not in consequence of his sufferings, nor by reason of his submission under them—but because he walked in the steps of the faith of Abraham, and so now his faith is also swallowed up in sight, and, like his great progenitor, he receives full possession of the promises which he formerly embraced, and of the reality of which he was fully persuaded long before. The picture in the parable of Lazarus in Abraham's bosom, is the precious representation before the eye of the words of the Apostle, "So then

they which be *of faith, are blessed with faithful Abraham.*"—(Galatians iii. 9.)

It is just this which makes the eternal distinction between Lazarus and the rich man. The one believed, the other did not. And so Lazarus sits down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God, while the rich man is cast out. Through faith the one has entered into rest. Because of unbelief the other enters not, and so the wrath of God abides upon him. And just as this is implied in the mere introduction of Abraham here, so his conversation with the rich man fully proves it. See what the latter desires for his brethren. He begs that Lazarus may be sent to testify to them, if it may be that they will "HEAR," "BE PERSUADED," and "REPENT." This is just as if he had confessed, that in his lifetime he had done none of these things. It is his acknowledgment that his lot in torment was but the necessary result of his not *hearing, believing,* (or being persuaded,) and *repenting.* It distinctly and unequivocally implies that Lazarus in Abraham's bosom had escaped the torment with which the other is now enveloped, just because he *did* hear, believe, and repent. It was not his riches that gave the rich man his place in torment; neither was it the poverty of Lazarus that gave him his place in bliss. It was because the one rejected the counsel of God against himself, and turned a deaf ear to God, who, "at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in times past unto him;" and because the other "believed God, and so it was counted to him for righteousness."

And besides all this, the language of Abraham clearly sets forth what is the grand and fruitful source of all man's misery and death. Not the *deficiency* of evidence, but the deficiency of willingness to receive any evidence at all. "*If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.*" It is impossible to pass unnoticed the wonderful confirmation of this statement which the after history of Christ supplied, and which is still more striking from the identity of the names. When Lazarus, the brother of Martha and Mary, was raised from the dead—when those who had seen him a dead corpse, saw him once more sitting at the supper-table with his Master—this, instead of bringing the enemies of Christ to his feet, only stirred them up all the more to conspire against him, to put

him to death. Verily, a Lazarus did go to *them* from the dead; but a deaf ear to Moses and the prophets made them blind to this also, and so they were not "persuaded."

And here, then, the true disciple who is building on the one foundation, even Christ, is taught some precious and important truths regarding his work. He must be ready not only to *do*, but to *suffer*. He must make up his mind to a cheerful acquiescence in the will of God, even if God shall be pleased to send him manifold "evil things" in his outward lot—even if he be laid as a Lazarus at some rich man's gate, and dependent on the merest charity for his daily food. In other words, he must let patience have her perfect work, and rest assured that those will not be among the least precious or beautiful of the stones he is building on the tried foundation, which, under the chastening hand of God, give some blessed tokens of resemblance to and fellowship in suffering with him who "knew not where to lay his head." Further, this parable must teach him not to be jealous at the prosperity of the wicked; it must tell him how uncertain these things are which the men of the world choose as their portion, and how "the rich man," who trusts in his riches, "fades away in his ways." And far from envying them, therefore, when they are "flourishing like a green bay-tree," it appeals to his every sympathy and feeling to lose no time in seeking, by prayer and every other possible means, to do that which the poor man in torment so eagerly desired to do, but in vain, namely, to turn the wicked from his wickedness—the rich man from his confidence—that they may be converted and live.

CHAPTER VII.

THE PHARISEE AND PUBLICAN—THE SON ASKING BREAD—THE FRIEND AT MIDNIGHT—THE UNRIGHTEOUS JUDGE.

We come now to a very interesting and important group of parables. When the bitterest persecutor of the early church was converted to God, he was pointed out to a disciple of Jesus, in his changed condition, by these significant words, "Behold, he prayeth." And that prayer was a life-long one. The simple turning of his heart toward his Father, and the affecting words poured forth by the poor prodigal, beautifully represent the spirit of adoption in the true child of God, "whereby he cries, Abba, Father." We have then, as we might expect, some precious parables bearing on this express mark of true discipleship. The wise builder must not only see to his foundation, take heed unto his spirit, and diligently add to his building one stone after another of those "works which are by Jesus Christ to the praise of God," but he must ever throughout the whole process see that he uses proper tools for his work. Unless he does this, he will not proceed either so rapidly or so successfully in his work as he might, and as he ought. If he uses inferior tools, he will often be satisfied with "wood, hay, and stubble," for his materials. It is only when he has those tools in his hand which are altogether suitable for his work, that he never will use any thing but the finest and most precious material—"gold, silver, precious stones." What he has to labor with, then, throughout his whole course of work, is *prayer*. Just as the man who has "the whole armor of God," will not even then fight *well* unless he is "praying always," so he, who has reached the true foundation, and has discovered the way to the proper quarries, will not even then build well, unless he continue "instant in prayer."

The first of this series of parables emphatically points out what prayer really is.

"*Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.*"—Luke xviii. 10–14.

Our Lord, just before delivering this parable, had spoken another, "to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint." But while encouraging them to this duty, he takes care to impress upon them in that now before us what that duty really is. A mistake here is fatal. He has no encouragement for a life-long prayer, such as that offered up by the Pharisee, but only for that breathed forth by the publican.

It is important to notice that this parable was not spoken *to* Pharisees and publicans, nor *concerning* Pharisees and publicans. These two sections in the Jewish people are introduced by our Lord into the parable as fitly representing two distinct classes of mankind in general—those who "trust in themselves that they are righteous, and despise others," and those who, with gracious humility, repent truly before God. It is not improbable that, even among his own followers, Jesus detected the seeds of self-righteousness which needed to be cast out of their hearts, and that even such men as Peter, and James, and John, needed the solemn warning of this parable to guard them against exalting themselves and despising others. That he should, however, introduce a Pharisee into the parable as a type of the self-righteous spirit generally, is a remarkable proof in confirmation of what has been already advanced in this volume, namely, that our Lord's frequent allusions in his discourses to the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Publicans, must not be regarded as merely addressed to them severally and exclusively, but to them as "each representing psychologically a distinct class of persons." It is thus that from the pages of the Gospel the mere names of

these sects seem to vanish away, and leave only those grand principles they represent, and by one or other of which all mankind are moved Self-righteousness and pride—unbelief and self-indulgence—or, godly sorrow for sin.

Let us then first note what the parable condemns, though it has the outward aspect of prayer. The very mode in which the Pharisee is represented as engaging in prayer is suggestive, "*He stood and prayed.*" This expression, "*he stood*," does not refer to the mere attitude of *standing* instead of *kneeling* at prayer, but it sets forth a certain formality in his proceedings forcibly descriptive of his state of mind. It is as if it were said, "He took his place"—he set himself pompously in the position he chose, in order to go through regularly and formally the routine of his devotions. We are by no means to suppose that he was in this acting a hypocritical part. He may have fancied all the time that he was really devout, and a true worshiper; but his very outward conduct indicated thus much, that if he practiced devotion in its outside observance, he knew nothing of its inner spirit.

Then, look further at the subject-matter of his prayer. Why, he is not as a suppliant, asking at the hands of God what he needs. He stands as one in need of nothing—as one rich in every spiritual gift and grace—and in the full tide of self-righteous feeling, he pours out a series of thanksgivings for what he is and what he does. His is not an humble prayer for what he requires, it is an arrogant, self-satisfied enumeration of what he vainly thinks that he possesses. And what is so broadly expressed in this part of the parable is just what exists in reality in unconverted minds. They pray, it may be—yea, they may do so constantly. Their place of devotion may be a distinguished one; but if the inward bearing of the spirit could be noticed, it would ever be found in reality to be breathing such a self-righteous spirit as that before us—contentment, with its present spiritual condition—satisfied and happy with what it *fancies* that it has, rather than earnestly seeking what it has not.

Then, see further how this spirit is expressed in the parable. The Pharisee not only enumerates a long list of excellent graces which he possesses, he also with great complacency regards himself as very much superior to others. He thanks God that he is "*not as other men are*," and specially that he is not as the poor

Publican. These two things are always to be found together—a lofty imagination of our own excellences, and a contemptuous glance at others. The heart that is self-satisfied, is just the heart that is ever on the alert to claim superiority over others. And so our Lord unites these two things in the statement with which he opens the parable, as descriptive of the character he was about to paint. "He spake this parable unto certain which *trusted* in *themselves* that they were righteous, and *despised others*."

But turn now to the illustration of what true prayer is. The Publican stands "*afar off*." He does not bustle into his place as the Pharisee. He must come where "prayer is wont to be made," because he must pray. But he stands afar off. He will keep out of sight. He has no desire to be seen of men in this act. The external part of devotion has but a slight hold upon him in comparison of what is rising up so vehemently of its spirit within him. Outward things—the people surrounding him—do not enter into his thoughts. It is enough for him that he is in the presence of an all-seeing, a heart-searching God. This absorbs his whole thought. This is too solemn a presence-chamber for him to see any other, save Him with whom he has to do. And so even amid many worshipers, he draws nigh to prayer, *alone* with God.

Then, "*he would not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven.*" Why so? Did he not come to pray? Why then not look up? To say that he was so humble, is only to give half the explanation.

The humility with which he kept his head bowed down to the earth, was but the consequence of that deep introspection which he was making into his own heart. It was *there* that his eyes an thoughts were directed. It was there he was gathering startling arguments of terrible power to force him to his cry of penitence and sorrow. Unlike the other who was gazing into the world at good deeds done, and around at greater sinners than himself, as he supposed, this poor Publican kept his eye fixed on that evil and corrupt and deceitful heart which he bore about with him every where, and as if the sad and terrible realities he discovered there—their deadly nature, their pollution and deceitfulness, amounted almost to physical agony, "*he smote upon his breast.*" The whole man was busy within himself—not in the wayward folly of looking away, so as to picture in imagination an excellence which had no real existence, but looking *in*, so that every

dark corner might be visited, and every root of bitterness dragged forth and seen.

And then hear his cry, "*God be merciful to me a sinner.*" He "*has come to himself.*" He has found out what he is. He casts about for no palliation—thinks of no excuse. He has none to condemn but himself. He has not the folly to suppose he can help himself. He has not the madness to promise that in future he will do better if only he be suffered to escape at present. No! Unreservedly, fully, and yet confidently, he leaves himself in the hands of God. "*Be merciful to me a sinner.*" God and himself are the only parties in his view. No third party can interpose. He is a sinner, and unless he gets rid of his sin he is lost. God alone can do this; and the only thing he can plead with such a God is, "*Be merciful.*" He had for himself found out in some measure what the prophet meant when he said, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, *but in me is thy help found.*" "Take with you words, and turn to the Lord and say, Take away all iniquity."

Our Lord adds, "*I tell you this man went down to his house justified rather than the other.*" Of course he does not mean by this that the prayer of the Publican justified him. That the man who pleaded merely for mercy should be justified by his prayer is absurd. He was justified, forgiven, his sin pardoned, his guilt remitted, by that mercy which he had invoked; but it was mercy in answer to his prayer. And thus we have brought before us these two things in connection with the sinner in the presence of God. God's love, mercy, and forgiveness toward him are marked by the humility and earnestness of his prayer to God. The free redemption from all sin granted by God to the sinner is ever accompanied on the part of that sinner with the heartfelt cry for mercy. In other words, true prayer such as that of the Publican does not and can not exist out of a state of justification, but only in it. It was after Paul was met by the way that he began to *pray*, no longer as the Pharisee, but as this Publican; and so also in his case the proud was abased, and the humble exalted.

Here, then, is the great instrument which must ever be in use by him who is building his house on Christ. Every stone which he lays must be done in the spirit of such prayer as this. Every thing he does must be begun, carried on, and ended, with this upon his heart, "*God be merciful to me a sinner;*" and then truly

he will be "blessed in his deed." He will have the sweet assurance within him of one whose mercy is over all his works; and the labor of his hands will no longer be a grievous toil and a heavy burden, but a happy, joyous, and free service. He will go down from every undertaking "justified freely from all things through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus." This will ever be the precious, cheering word of truth upon his heart—"If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins."

But just as this parable shows us what true prayer is, so also another parable of our Lord gives a most precious view of the confidence with which we may come with such a prayer as that of the Publican to God. Let us turn to this.

"*If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?*"—Luke xi. 11–13.

Here, then, we have these things set forth. We have first of all the relationship expressed which subsists between the suppliant and God—it is that of a father and son. This betokens the covenant of grace and mercy, under which the poor penitent makes his supplication. The Being whom he addresses is his "*heavenly Father.*" This endearing relationship has been formed by Christ. He it is who gives power to as many as believe in him to "become the sons of God." And "because they are sons, God sends forth the Spirit of his Son into their hearts, whereby they cry, Abba, Father." Oh, how precious it is to be able to begin every prayer with such a word of confidence and love, "My Father." The very word itself, as it trembles on the lip of the true believer, carries peace to his heart. It is the language of adoption. It is the utterance of one who has found a friend nigh at hand, and has not to gaze hopelessly after a God afar off.

But again, our Lord in pointing to the relation between God and the humble suppliant, is graciously pleased to draw from the domestic circles of earth some precious arguments for confidence in approaching our heavenly Father. There is something very touching in the manner in which he places his Father and our

Father, as it were on a level with earthly parents, as regards the most common and ordinary emotions of their hearts toward their offspring. "*If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone?*" This is not the way you ever dream of dealing with your children who depend on you for their support. When they are hungry, you do not mock them by giving them that which is not food. On the contrary, does not your heart rejoice when you can supply the nourishment they require? Would you not rather be without it yourselves, than that they should be famished? And still more, who among you would give a noxious and deadly thing instead of food? not merely mock at the urgent necessities of your children, by giving a stone instead of bread, but would give serpents and scorpions that might bite and sting, and inflict fatal injury on your own children? Jesus regards all this as so unnatural, that the general feeling, even among *fallen* men, will rise up in horror and detestation against such a want of parental love and care.

Well, then, he adds—"*If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those that ask him?*" Can any thing be more tenderly set forth than this? Can any thing exceed the kindness and the grace with which he thus encourages the suppliant to "ask that he may have?" We see and recognize the feelings which exist between a parent and his offspring—we understand their action and feel their power, and we are then assured by Christ that all such emotions in the earthly relationship of parent and child, are as nothing in comparison of what our heavenly Father bears toward his spiritual children. "How much *more*," says he, "will your heavenly Father," &c.

And then, mark what he says that our heavenly Father will give—"*The Holy Spirit.*" This comprises every other gift. Whatever the poor suppliant stands in need of—whatever he longs to obtain in the kingdom of grace, is included in the promised gift. St. Matthew says, "How much more shall your Father which is in heaven give *good things* to them that ask him?" All *good things* are conveyed to the waiting, praying child of God by the Holy Spirit. Not a single blessing for time or eternity, that is not immediately the result of his presence with the suppliant. When the poor penitent cries for pardon, "God be merciful to

me a sinner"—the Holy Spirit given, brings the pardon and the peace after which it pants. When the earnest soul entreats, "Open thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law"—the Holy Spirit given, "takes of the things of Christ and shows them" to the awakened and inquiring heart. When the convinced soul earnestly prays, "Create in me a new heart, and renew a right spirit within me"—the Holy Spirit given, does all this by his mighty power and love; and when the reclaimed sinner is journeying toward his home, and eagerly desires to "run in the way of God's commandments," the same Holy Spirit given, works in him mightily both to will and to do of God's good pleasure.

Here then is encouragement and confidence given to the disciple of Christ regarding prayer. All that he does must be begun and ended with prayer—yea, such a prayer as that of the Publican. But let him pray thus confidently—for he is speaking to a Father in Christ Jesus—a Father more ready to grant every needful blessing than any earthly parent to his offspring—a Father who opens his hand wide to fill every empty soul, and to satisfy every longing soul, by the one gift of his Holy Spirit, which includes all that *He* can give, or the soul receive.

But we turn now to a distinct branch of this subject of prayer. What we have been considering in the last two parables, refers to individual supplication on the part of the penitent sinner on behalf of himself. They tell us what his prayer ought to be—with what constancy it ought to be offered up—and what gracious encouragement he has in doing so. We have now to observe what the parables teach us regarding intercessory prayer. Here is the first view presented before us of this duty and privilege.

"*And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I can not rise and give thee. I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one*

that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened."—Luke xi. 5–10.

Our Lord, immediately before delivering this parable, had given to his disciples that form of prayer, which is so simple that the merest child may use it "with the heart and with the understanding also," and yet so sublime, that the most mature in grace, and knowledge, and virtue, need nothing more. After having given this form of prayer, Jesus, in this parable, proceeds to urge very forcibly on his disciples the duty not merely of praying, but of praying urgently, importunately, yea, of never ceasing to pray until the prayer be granted. And this exhortation of his is specially associated with intercessory prayer. That it should be so is just what might have been anticipated, when we regard the arrangement of the prayer he had just taught his disciples—for the intercessory petitions in that prayer, "thy kingdom come—thy will be done on earth," precede the personal supplications which the individual believer offers up. Therefore we need not be surprised if he enforced continued, energetic prayer, and that specially in intercession for others.

But, besides this, surely there is special comfort to be derived from this fact. If the exhortation to importunity in prayer had been given simply in connection with personal supplication for ourselves, it would, indeed, be precious encouragement to pray, and not to faint, to wait, to ask, to knock, and never to be weary, until we receive an answer; but this would not have comprehended the other. We could not have argued from the assurance given to personal prayer—when constantly urged—to the same regarding intercessory prayer. But now, when the assurance is so richly and fully given to *intercessory* prayer, we can confidently assume that all things which we need for ourselves, and for which we earnestly pray, will be given unto us.

Our Lord's application of the parable, "*And I say unto you, Ask*," guides us with certainty in the interpretation, specially when we couple that application with what immediately follows, and which we have above considered, regarding the Father and the gift he so willingly bestows. The man who goes to his friend to ask for three loaves, is the believer drawing near to ask a favor from God. The friend to whom he goes is "the Father in Heaven." And what the friend gives at length, represents

the gift of the "Holy Spirit"—all "good things" that are sought for.

Without endeavoring to trace out too minute resemblances in the details of the parable, we may, at least, in passing, suggest the following. The friend who is in want of the bread, and for whom application is made, comes, as we are told, "*at midnight.*" It is only in this dark world that such requests can be made and responded to. Appeals for help by one sinner to another, and intercession on behalf of a fellow-sinner, can never be of any avail, except in this day of gloom and thick darkness. As soon as the bridegroom cometh, and his day commences, no such communications can any more take place. Then it is said that this man was "*in his journey.*" The margin gives a very striking rendering, and most probably the true one—"out of the way." This gives great naturalness to the story. It is the case of a benighted traveler—one who has lost his way in the darkness, and providentially lights upon the house of a friend. And so we have the condition of a poor sinner, "out of the way," walking on still in darkness, not knowing whither he goeth, and then obtaining help from a fellow-sinner.

Then mark what the man does whose door the wanderer had reached. He goes to a friend's house, and he begs three loaves of bread, for he says *he has* nothing to set before the poor needy man in whom he is interested. This is just the believer bearing on his heart before God the case of one whom he can not help himself. What that other needs is heavenly food—the bread of life—that he may eat and live forever. The believer knows where this is to be *had*, but he has no power in himself to bestow it. All that he can do is to entreat him who *has* it, and who *can give* it, to bestow it on his needy friend; and the parable then points to the blessed assurance that the help thus sought will not be denied.

But further, see what the parable tells us of the man to whom the application was made. He says "*Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I can not rise and give thee.*" This person is meant in the parable to represent Him to whom the believer is urged to go. And yet let it be distinctly noted what the ground of comparison is. It is not that the one is *like* the other, but the argument is from the less to the greater,

or rather from the worse to the better. "*If selfish man* can be won by prayer and importunity to give, and *unjust man* to do right, much more certainly shall the *bountiful* Lord bestow, and the *righteous* Lord do right."

The two points which are mainly brought out in the parable here are, first, the assurance given to the believer to pray for a needy fellow-sinner—that if the churlish man was at length led to do as required, infinitely more may the believer reckon on the help and favor of God. Then, besides this, we are taught that it is only in answer to unceasing prayer, urgent, earnest prayer, that this will be given. The believer is to be as importunate in his entreaty as if he had overcome the greatest dislike on the part of his heavenly Father to grant to him the desires of his heart. This importunity is very forcibly set before us by our Lord's application of the parable, "ask," "seek" "knock." Each one of these words manifests increased not diminished importunity, encouraging the believer to this realization of his privilege, namely, that far from being cast down, when, again and again, he seems to be repulsed, each successive apparent refusal should only add earnestness to his entreaty, and more impressive urgency to his prayer.

For, be it observed, that the repeated refusals on the part of the man in the parable, which arose merely from dislike to be troubled, are, in the case of the believer, represented in it most important trials of his faith—not thrown in his path out of the caprice or whim of one who is dealing with him, but for the wisest and most loving pupose—first, that his own confidence in his heavenly Father might be put to a proper proof—might be fairly tested as to its strength and firmness, and so the gift, when at length bestowed, be a suitable confirmation of that faith.

Our Lord's conduct toward the Syro-Phenician woman exhibited in a very remarkable manner the leading points which this parable is intended to illustrate. On that occasion we perceive one coming to Christ, not on behalf of herself, but on behalf of her child. Her daughter is suffering under Satanic agency, and she, the poor mother, is helpless in the way of giving relief. Christ can do this, she knows; and she knows of none other who can. She comes anxiously to him then. She is thoroughly in earnest in the matter, and deeply interested in the result. At

first, Jesus replied not at all. He seemed studiously to repulse her. Just like the man in the parable who suffered the applicant to remain outside the house—did not even open the door, and allow him to prefer his request on the threshold—so Christ, when the Gentile woman first asked, gave her not the slightest encouragement. Far from checking her earnestness, however, this seemed only to make her more importunate. She came and worshiped him, and cried, "Lord, help me." Then Jesus appeared even harshly to extinguish all hope of assistance from him, almost spurning her from his feet—"It is not good to take the children's bread and cast it to dogs." But even this failed to turn her from her purpose. It only gave her a fresh argument for continued entreaty. "Truth, Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table." And now her faith was crowned with blessing. She had *asked*, not only so but *sought*, not only so but *knocked*, and now she received, she found, and the door was thrown wide open to her. "O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt." Jesus withheld his answer for the purpose not only of proving and trying her, but also of giving her a larger and a fuller joy at last; and she learned by the process through which she had passed that importunity in prayer was not required in order to induce Christ to listen, but that it called forth the graces of patience, of child-like confidence, of loving expectation, and added preciousness to the blessing when received.

Here, then, we see duty and privilege going hand in hand as they always do. It is our solemn duty to seek for the bread of life to be given to others. This duty becomes more palpable and direct the nearer that those who need it are to ourselves. And it is at the same time our precious privilege to be assured that we shall not ask, or seek, or knock in vain. Then precept and encouragement go hand in hand also. The injunction manifestly laid down in the parable is, to "continue instant in prayer"—never to allow any refusal, or number of refusals, to cause despondency, but the reverse—to quicken and make more earnest and pressing than ever our anxious entreaties. And the encouragement lies close by. The very length of time when we may be held waiting—the very absence from day to day of the desired blessing, is not for one moment to be set down to an unwilling-

ness to hear and give on the part of our heavenly Father, but, on the contrary, to his graciously preparing to give us "more than we can even ask or think." *That* is a remarkable termination to the story in the parable—"*I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is a friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth.*" The importunity of the man at the door at length prevails, so that the man in the house does not order some one of his household to rise and give just the three loaves, but *he himself* rises, and is ready to give "*as many as he needeth.*" And so the believer is encouraged to know that thus it will be with his heavenly Father, that "*because of his importunity he will rise and give,*" and that, too, out of the tenderest friendship, which did not influence the man in the parable at all, He will be ready to pour upon him such a full blessing as there shall not be room enough to receive it.

One other parable still remains, which completes the view presented before us of the great duty and privilege of prayer.

"*And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: and there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?*"—Luke xviii. 1–8.

In this parable, as in that we have just considered, the argument is from the worse to the better. "None but the Son of God himself might have ventured to use this comparison. It had been over bold on the lips of any other. For, as in the parable of the friend at midnight, we were startled with finding God compared to a churlish neighbor, so here with finding him likened to an *unrighteous* judge. Yet we must not seek therefore to extenuate, as some have been at great pains to do, and by many forced constructions, his unrighteousness; but, on the contrary,

the greater we conceive that to have been, the more encouragement does the parable contain, the stronger the argument for persevering prayer becomes. If a bad man will yield to the mere force of the importunity which he hates, how much more certainly will a righteous God be prevailed on by the faithful prayer which he loves?"—(Trench, p. 492.)

Before noting the special bearing of this parable, it will be well to glance briefly at the different points in detail. The only two points in which there is a direct and complete resemblance between this unjust judge and God are these; first, the delay before granting the request of the suppliant; and next, the favorable issue at length of the supplication itself. In all other respects the unjust judge and God stand in direct and complete contrast with each other. It is, however, from this very contrast, forcible as it is, that the main argument in the parable derives its fullest confirmation. Let us look at these in succession.

Observe, then, the character of this judge *generally*. "*He feared not God, neither regarded man.*" This is said, irrespective of the special case about to be detailed in the parable. It is the description of what this man was always and under every circumstance —thoroughly, radically, lawless and unjust. On the contrary, without respect to this special act of his people praying to him, Jehovah is "just and true in *all* his ways." His every act is in strict conformity with his own most holy law, and through the whole course of his government the Judge of all the earth doeth right. And see here, then, the contrast between the condition of the poor woman in the parable and God's elect. She had none other than one *unjust* judge to whom she could appeal—that tribunal was her only refuge; failing that, she had no prospect of relief. The other also has but *one* tribunal to which they can appeal; but then righteousness and judgment are the establishment of that throne on which their Judge forever sits, and thus they are assured of an equitable sentence.

Again, mark when this unjust judge resolved on yielding to the widow's request, how in a special manner his unrighteous character displayed itself in his very act of granting relief to her. He took no pains to discover whether her cause was right or not. It was a matter of perfect indifference to him whether she were the injured party or not—whether she really needed to be de-

fended from another, or was herself only anxious to inflict an injury. All this never entered into his calculations. His sole reason for yielding assent to her petition was the fear of being constantly troubled by her importunity, "lest by her continual coming, she weary me." Nay, he makes a boast of this:—"*Though I fear not God, nor regard man*," he says. He is anxious to clear himself of the possible *weakness* of acting in the widow's case from principles of justice and truth. His sole desire is to save himself all further trouble in the matter. On the contrary, when God hears the prayer of his elect, and answers it, he proceeds on the strictest principles of law and justice—not a single petition granted to one or all of his people, which is not stamped with the image and superscription of that King, "the girdle of whose loins is *righteousness*," and who gives, not because he cares not to withhold, but because his *law* is magnified and made honorable in the gift.

But further, as this unjust judge did not grant the widow's petition out of any regard to the justice of the claims she advanced, neither did he grant it out of any regard to the poor suppliant herself. She was an object of perfect indifference to him. He cared nothing for her happiness and prosperity on the one hand, or her misery and wretchedness on the other. All he sought was to get rid of her and her petition together, and so hear nothing more of either. Well may our Lord mark *this* contrast so emphatically in this parable. "*Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge* HIS OWN ELECT? How these words "*his own elect*" touch in the tenderest manner the great and eternal contrast between this unjust judge and God! The latter yields to the prayer of the suppliants; first, because it is *right* to do so, and then he does it with his whole heart, it is his joy and delight to do so. The suppliants are his own beloved people—his chosen ones, very precious in his sight—so precious, indeed, that it is said of them, "he that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye." And so his gift comes to them distinguished by the tokens of that "holiness which becometh God's house forever," as well as of "a love which passeth knowledge."

Mark, then, how the very contrasts here presented only tend to confirm the blessed assurance which the parable conveys to God's people, that he will without fail grant their requests. His eternal

character as a righteous God must be sustained. The prayers of his saints present a righteous claim. And moreover he loves his own elect with an everlasting love. While, too, he requires from them a patient continuance in supplication, and an ever-increasing earnestness in drawing near to him, even as if he needed to be overcome by such importunity, he yet sustains their faith by such pledges of his truth and love, and by such exceeding great and precious promises, as may, indeed, cause them "*always to pray, and not to faint.*"

And now, it is important, as we draw toward the great application of the parable, to observe, that it is Christ who is specially set forth in it, as the avenger of his own elect. The question at the close, settles this point, "Nevertheless, when *the Son of man* cometh." For what purpose? Let the Apostle Paul furnish the reply. "When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, *taking vengeance;* or, as it is very forcibly rendered in the margin, "*yielding* vengeance," that is, yielding to the cry of his elect for vengeance. The avenger of God's elect, then, is the *Son of man* at his coming.

And this must be carefully borne in mind, if we would rightly understand the special view of continuing instant in prayer, which this parable is designed to set forth. It is not personal prayer—nor is it intercessory prayer for friends. It is indeed, well qualified to give encouragement in both these respects. But it is specially and distinctively prayer for the whole body of Christ's Church—prayer for the coming and establishment of his kingdom, and the complete and final overthrow of all his enemies. The great subject of the prayer is, "*Avenge me of mine adversary.*" And, as in the parable, the party who utters this, is a poor widow woman, so we are by it reminded of the church in her present bereaved and desolate condition—deprived by her enemies of what is due to her—suffering oppression and sorrow; and yet as generation after generation pass away from the tribulations of the world, there lingers ever on the track of their trials and their griefs, the earnest cry, "Lord, how long dost thou not judge and avenge our cause!"

And here we see one resemblance in the parable between the unjust judge and Christ. We are told of the first: "*he would not for a time;*" and of the Avenger of God's elect, it is added, "*though*

he bear long with them," that is, stays his hand; he knows the limit which he himself has appointed for the long trial of the faith and patience of his church; but though he tarries, yet he slumbers not. Just as he longed to accomplish his own work of suffering for them, so he longs to put an end to their trials, and to "*avenge them speedily*."

And thus the meaning of the question at the close of the parable becomes very plain. "Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" That is, when the Son of man shall at length come—arise to take vengeance—to bring in the year of his redeemed—the very thing which his people in every age have been praying for, "thy kingdom come,"—the very thing which his whole character as a righteous God and a loving Saviour are pledged to secure—which he has *promised* to bring in—confirmed his promise with an *oath*, and *sealed* it by his own blood, and entreated his people to pray for without fainting—will he, when he at length appears, find a faith among his people at all commensurate to the truth, love, and fullness of what he has done and promised on his side? Will he find such unflinching, faithful prayer, when the last shadows of the night that precede the dawn of his day are gathering thickly around, as shall show no *faint*-heartedness among his people? Will the cry, "Lord, how long"—"Avenge us of our adversaries," become stronger or weaker as the day approaches? Will there be vigilant, prayerful eagerness to redouble entreaty and importunately to multiply prayer, as the hours of the last terrible conflict ring out their knell?—or, like the disciples in the garden, will there be "sleeping for sorrow?" or, the "love of many waxing cold," by reason of abounding iniquity? Solemn questions, indeed. Enough to make each child of God tremble for himself. Enough to make each one, as he truly desires to "stand in his lot at the end of days," take good heed to the weighty lesson taught in the parable, that "*men ought always to pray, and not to faint*." *Always!* Not merely in the sunshine of peace and quiet, and when there is little comparatively to try faith, but equally when the storm and the tempest are abroad, and nothing but a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul can prevent it from drifting away to everlasting ruin.

And thus in these last parables, we have the implements with which the wise builder must ever labor when building his house

on the sure foundation. *Prayer*—humble, faithful, persevering, importunate prayer;—prayer for himself, "Give us each day our daily bread;" prayer for his brethren of mankind, "Thy will be done on earth;" prayer for the establishment and glory of his Master's kingdom, "Thy kingdom come." With such prayer as this—constant through life, and instant by its urgency—he will indeed "prove himself to be a workman that needeth not to be ashamed."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SALT OF THE EARTH—THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD—THE OFFENDING EYE, FOOT, OR HAND—BROTHER, SISTER, AND MOTHER.

THERE are still three views of true discipleship which we must pass rapidly under our notice, and which will very suitably close this division of the parables. The first of these concerns the influence which a true follower of Christ has, and ought to exert in the world. If Christ's inner work of grace be truly proceeding *in* him, this influence must ever be proceeding steadily *from* him. We have, in a few verses, a most precious view given us of this influence, in short parabolic sentences.

"*Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.*

"*Ye are the light of the world.*

"*A city that is set on an hill can not be hid.*

"*Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light to all that are in the house.*"—Matt. v. 13–15.

When the prodigal turns again to his father in bitter sorrow, he must not only express his penitence, but he must "bring forth fruits meet for repentance." He must not, however, do these things in order to be seen of men, but to have "praise of God." Still, it is important to bear in mind, that if on the one hand he esteems lightly and at its proper value, the applause or praise of men, and proceeds on his way, irrespective of their frowns or their smiles, yet he must honor and confess his God before men. He must take care that "the *beauty* of holiness" is manifested in his whole life and character, so that all men shall see whither he is going, and have some faint conceptions of the purity and

brightness of his home above, by the shining garments with which, as a pilgrim, he is traveling onward to heaven. The wise builder, while his chief object is to raise his house as God approves, must see that he wait on God continually to know how best he may also manifest before men the work of God in his hands.

The verses just quoted show four different ways in which the believer is called upon to take heed unto himself that Christ's work in him shall be felt, seen, and known among men. He must remember that he is "*the salt of the earth.*" Salt preserves that with which it is mingled from falling to decay. And believers are said to be "the salt of the earth" for these two reasons: First, by their presence among the otherwise godless race of mankind. They are the cause why God's wrath is held back from the latter. To what an extent this preserving influence is exercised by them, through the tender-mercy of God, may be seen by the remarkable intercession of Abraham on behalf of Sodom. There, though the men were exceedingly wicked, and even among idolatrous nations the cry had come up for marked and condign punishment upon *them*, yet, even there, Jehovah promised to hold back his hand and not to destroy the place, if there were only *ten* righteous men in it. Another instance forcibly confirming this view, is to be found in the opening chapter of Isaiah, where the Prophet declares that it was alone by the presence among them of "a very small remnant," that the terrible judgment which had overtaken the guilty cities of the plain had not also overtaken them. The parable of the tares and the wheat speaks similar language. The tares are suffered to remain, because of the wheat.

Again, believers are the salt of the earth, because in their direct intercourse with mankind, they, by their good works, their holy life, their pure aspirations, produce a great effect in restraining the tide of evil and ungodliness. Their direct personal influence is continually pervading, more or less, the whole mass of human society, and thus many checks are imposed on iniquity, and a bridle put in the mouth of the wicked. They imperceptibly, but truly, exercise an influence, in the absence of which the whole human family would soon become nothing else than a lazar-house of plague and corruption—a vast cemetery of the dead.

Now the preserving quality in salt is its savor. If that be lost, the salt becomes utterly useless. Whether there can be such a thing as salt without savor, is matter of dispute, but is unessential to our present purpose. All that we need to mark is, that if salt have *not* its saltness, or its savor, it is utterly worthless. And so if believers lack what in them corresponds to the savor of the salt, they also must be utterly worthless in these two things just mentioned—either in arresting God's judgment upon the earth, or in stemming the torrent of actual corruption. Now it is manifest that *Christ* is the *savor* in all true believers. It is alone by his presence in them that any one benefit or blessing is conveyed to the earth in which they dwell. Each one of them has been washed in the *blood* of Christ, and this blood speaks better things than "that of Abel." The latter cried for vengeance. This cries for mercy. So that whenever God looks on a loving child on earth, he sees the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus, his only-begotten Son; and seeing this, he bears long with the iniquity of the guilty ones of earth—he spares them—he forbears to strike—he gives them, again and again, opportunity to repent, and, as in the days of Noah, his "long-suffering waits." Thus it is only when the believer can say, in a measure, that it is "Christ to him to live," that his savor is made manifest in every place. It is when people take knowledge of him that he has been with Christ—when he bears about with him the presence of his Divine Master, that wickedness is restrained, and sin shamed into corners. If Christ be not thus with them who profess his name, they are no blessing, but the reverse, to the people of the world around them. They are causes of offense and falling, of decay and death, not of preservation and life. And it is just in proportion as the believer fully lives up to the excellence of that savor which he possesses, that he exerts the full influence he may ever do as "*the salt of the earth.*"

But further, the believer is also "*the light of the world.*" As "the salt of the earth," he is a gracious means of preservation from decay. As "*the light of the world,*" he is the gracious means of preventing the whole earth from being covered with gross darkness. This he does by "holding forth the word of life." He has received into his heart and understanding those great truths which God alone can teach, and which are excellent and

perfect, and he exhibits them in the midst of a perverse and sinful generation. Imperceptibly his influence is felt here likewise, as in the former case. Though men may refuse to accept fully what he has received, though they may not choose to "come to the light," lest their deeds should be reproved, yet they can not prevent some scattered beams of that light from reaching them. Thus the enlightening and ennobling principles of the word of God—as precious for the intellectual as the moral man, pervade human society, wherever true disciples of the Lord Jesus are to be found. High principle, based on the revealed maxims of the word of God, unwittingly drawn, or, as it were, stolen from thence—steady, well-balanced mental activity, stimulated by the actual presence of what reflects Infinite Wisdom, are found to exist even among the ranks of the people of the world. And thus while they affect to despise the humble, the lowly, and the meek follower of Jesus, they are in fact deriving from his vital "holding forth of the word of life," whatever of true light shines in their habitation. And here, too, it is just as the believer holds forth Christ, that he is "*the light of the world.*" Christ is the source and the author of the light he possesses. He shines as "a light in the world," because Christ "the true light" shines in him.

But again, the believer is "*a city that is set on a hill,*" and so "*can not be hid.*" In the last figure, the influence of the believer is felt by the world, without the latter knowing or caring to know that it is so. In this figure it is intimated to us, that a true follower of Christ will assuredly, just as his Master did, draw attention to himself. He "*can not be hid,*" because he is "*a city set on a hill.*" If he is careful in his walk—specially if he be jealous in manifesting that all he *is* depends on Christ, and all he does is *for* Christ—if he make it very clear that he is built upon the rock Christ, he will draw eyes to himself. Men will take note of him; they will see that he has solid reason for happiness; they will perceive that he has discovered that, of which they in the plain of destruction knew nothing; that he is secure from the floods which may overwhelm them below, and so they may be drawn by the influence of what they behold in the strength and safety of the believer as resting on his Master, to seek for the same foundation, to share in the "munition of rocks" which guard and defend him.

Once more, the believer is like "*a candle*," not "*lighted*" to be "*put under a bushel*," but "on a candlestick," that it may "*give light to them that are in the house.*" This is not to be regarded as a mere repetition of the former verse, "Ye are the light of the world." Its purport is perfectly distinct. In that verse it is "*the world*," among whom some rays of light penetrate from the believer when he bears Christ with him and holds forth his word. In this it is *the house*, and the people in *the house* who are benefited by the light. The area is vastly circumscribed here. In the former case the light travels over the world, lighting up bright points here and there on the dark mountains of vanity, so that at least, it may be said, that there is some witness for the light of life among men. In the latter, the light is confined to the house. It is then the influence which the believer may exert among the household of faith. That which tells in this does not tell upon the world at large; but he must be as jealous and watchful in the one case as in the other. He must be as careful of all that he is in the eyes of the church, as an example to believers, as he is in the eyes of the world, as a warning against their evil ways, and so his light must shine before *men*, *all* men, whether in the Church or in the world, and we may add, whether in private or public, within the circle of his family, or amid the busy haunts of men, that they may see his good works and glorify his Father which is in heaven.

We pass on to another group of parabolic passages, which present before us another and a very solemn view of what is required at the hands of a true disciple.

"*And if thy hand offend thee*, (or, *cause thee to offend*, margin,) *cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched; where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.*

"*And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off.* . . .

"*And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out.*"—Mark ix. 43–48.

It is important, in gaining a correct apprehension of this passage, that we note well what it is in the figure that we are required to put away, if it either cause offense to ourselves or to others. A *hand*, a *foot*, or an *eye*. Observe, it is not the one or the other of these under the influence of disease, but simply regarded by themselves. And here, then, is a lesson of self-denial,

of a peculiar character, indicated to the believer. All the evil and corrupt lusts and passions which belong to depraved humanity, he is of course called upon at once to part with. He must crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts—he must mortify his evil and corrupt members that are upon the earth—he must make no more provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof, and cleanse himself from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit; but when all this is in process of being done, there is something else besides which must not be left undone. There are certain things which he must be willing to give up, nay, violently to thrust away from him, which are not to be found in the list of the affections and lusts of the flesh—things which, considered in themselves, may be as really good and lawful to the soul as the hand, or the foot, or the eye to the body. There may be things pleasant to the eye, agreeable to the taste, refreshing to the mind, and captivating to the intellect—there may be things in which the hand might be most pleasantly engaged—there may be places where the foot might very willingly and happily be often found, and each one of these things so agreeable to our inclinations be at the same time perfectly lawful, involving *in themselves* no sin or guilt on the part of him who seeks them; and yet, if they become sources of spiritual offense to ourselves or to others—if, however good in themselves, they become, under the present circumstances of our lot, liable to check the growth of the inner spiritual life, and to call forth into proportionate activity some of the latent germs of the old nature within, then we must have no hesitation in parting with all these things. The process may be a most painful one—the things which we, as it were, "*cut off*," or "*pluck out*," may be in themselves perfectly harmless; but we must cast them all from us that we fall not into condemnation. Truly, if our Lord Jesus Christ solemnly warned his disciples that it were better for a man that a millstone should be hanged about his neck, than that he should cause offenses to those around, we need not be surprised at the strong terms in which he insists on believers earnestly watching against the indulgence of any thing which, however lawful in itself, may yet lead to scandal or offense, nor of the unshrinking self-denial which he demands in dealing with it and putting it away. Surely many things will be suggested to the thoughtful mind, which will range themselves

under the above category, of *lawful*, but not expedient, and therefore to be dealt with at once *as if* they were unlawful. Paul furnishes us with a remarkable example in his own person of the carrying out of this rule. In alluding to the practice of idolaters eating in the idol's temple meat that had been offered to idols, and by which act they were generally regarded as idolaters; and seeing that some Christians at Corinth, using their liberty, were found partaking of the food, without meaning by so doing to acknowledge the idol as any thing; and yet, by this conduct on their part, were wounding the consciences of their brethren, filling their minds with uncertainty, and so in reality putting a stumbling-block in their way—the Apostle emphatically declares what his conduct would be under such circumstances. "If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no meat while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend."

One other passage still remains, and it fitly closes this part of the subject. A very brief notice of it will suffice.

"But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, *Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.*" —Matt. xii. 48–50.

We have seen the influence which the disciple of Jesus is called upon to exercise constantly in the world and in the Church. We have seen the call upon him for unsparing self-denial, even in lawful things if they become matters of offense. And now we have set forth his high and glorious privilege. If the inner work of the grace of Christ leads to such a blessed, and bright, and holy life and conduct as shall constrain others to glorify God—if it shall make him ready even to pluck out an eye, or cut off a hand, rather than offend *one* of God's little ones—how blessed and precious amid all this is the relationship which the same grace calls forth and establishes between Christ and himself! Let the wise builder on the true foundation well consider this. Let the faithful laborer in the vineyard earnestly ponder over this. "*He that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.*" The very labor in which they are engaged is that which marks their privilege in

this wondrous relationship with Christ. The very burden and heat of the day which they are bearing, is just doing the will of their Father in heaven; and so as they have grace to be thus faithful, thus "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord," their divine Master encircles them with this unutterable glory, crowns them with this distinguished honor—they are to him as "*brother, and sister, and mother.*" The mere earthly ties which bound him to his mother and brethren according to the flesh are as nothing in comparison of this. They vanish and disappear in the presence of this most excellent and glorious distinction bestowed on the members of his mystical body, the Church. And if the former sought to realize the blessing and the glory of relationship to Christ at all, and feared to be disowned by him, it could only be by entering within the spiritual circle of true discipleship, and therein doing the will of God from the heart.

And mark the fullness of the privilege. "*Brother, sister, and mother*"—all that can be conceived by the heart of man regarding these relationships, in their highest sense and purest condition—all that can be imagined of brotherly, sisterly, and motherly union, within the hallowed circle of a pure and a holy home, is intended by our Lord to be considered by his faithful ones as only affording a faint shadow of that bright and better relationship existing between himself and them. He has a brother's love for them, with its manliness and self-devotion. He has a sister's love for them, with its gentleness and constancy. He has a mother's love toward them, with all its unwearied watchfulness, its unselfish care, its sustained forbearance, and its unspeakable tenderness. Oh, if even here the heart of a true believer leaps with joy, when sometimes the deep, spiritual impressions of his Saviour's *home*-love break in upon him, by the gracious inner speaking of the Holy Spirit—what will his emotions be on that day when the work of grace shall be completed by the work of glory, and He that sits upon the throne shall, as it were, stretch forth his hand toward his chosen ones, and say, "*Behold my mother and my brethren.*"

PART IV.

CHRIST'S WORK OF GRACE, IN ITS HISTORICAL AND PROPHETICAL CHARACTER.

SECT. I.—GENERAL RECEPTION AND PROGRESS OF THE GOSPEL.

CHAPTER I.

THE SOWER—THE GROWTH OF THE SEED—THE WHEAT AND THE TARES.

We have now arrived at another section of the parables of Jesus. Those we have considered in the last part of this volume have more to do with the *inner* history of Christ's kingdom. These now before us are chiefly directed to the external history of that kingdom. Still, as we proceed in our examination of the latter, we shall be ever gaining farther insight into important particulars regarding the former. As we watch the mighty stream of the Gospel in its onward course to the glorious consummation, when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the channel of the sea, we shall never cease to acquire deeper insight into all those things which pertain to the work of grace in each heart, which manifest the principles in progress there, and the precious fruits which these principles produce.

We go on, then, to examine those parables which specially illustrate the reception of the Gospel in all ages of this dispensation among those to whom it is sent, and what its actual progress is and will be. The first to be considered is the following:—

"*Behold a sower went forth to sow: and when he sowed, some seeds fell by the wayside, and the fowls came and devoured them up: some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth; and forthwith*

they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: and when the sun was up, they were scorched: and, because they had no root, they withered away: and some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: but other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundred-fold some sixty-fold, some thirty-fold."—Matt. xiii. 3–8; Mark, iv. 3–8; Luke, viii. 5–8.

Before expressly considering this parable, it may be well to realize the scenery in the midst of which it was delivered. The following description will give us some idea of what it probably was. Jesus uttered this parable from a boat into which he had entered on the Lake of Genesareth, while the people to whom it was uttered stood on the shore. "The Jewish writers, (says Trench,) would have it, that it (Genesareth) was beloved of God above all the waters of Canaan; and, indeed, almost all ancient authors that have mentioned it, as well as modern authors, speak in glowing terms of the beauty and fertility of its banks. Hence sometimes its name of Genesareth has been derived, which some explain as 'the garden of riches,' though the derivation is insecure. And even now, when the land is crushed under the rod of Turkish misrule, many traces of its former beauty remain, many evidences of the fertility which its shores will again assume in the day which assuredly can not be very far off, when that rod shall be lifted from them. It is true that the olive gardens and vineyards which once crowned the high and romantic hills with which it is bounded on east and west have disappeared, but the citron, the orange, and the date-trees are still found there in rich abundance; and in the higher regions the products of a more temperate zone meet together with these; while lower down, its banks are covered with aromatic shrubs, and its waters are still as of old, sweet and wholesome to drink, and always cool, clear, and transparent to the very bottom, and as quietly breaking upon the fine white sand with which its shores are strewn, as they did of old, when the feet of the Son of God trod these sands, or walked upon these waters."

We can easily imagine how such scenery as this would at once supply to our Lord the imagery of the parables which he delivered on this occasion. It may be, that "the Lord lifted up his eyes, and saw at no great distance an husbandman scattering his seed in the furrows." This would furnish the ground-work for

his parable of the sower, and of the tares in the field. And even when he had retired with his disciples into the house, (verse 36,) some of whom were themselves fishermen of Galilee, it may be that the dragging of some net to shore, just as they left the margin of the lake, would be equally suggestive of the parable with which this remarkable series closes.

In giving our attention to the parable of the sower, let us first of all notice one or two of its leading features. Who is the sower here spoken of? In the explanation given by our Lord of this parable, he does not directly answer this question, though it is obviously implied. In the next parable, however, where we have similar imagery introduced—a sower sowing in his field, he expressly declares what he means. "He that soweth the good seed is *the Son of man*." We carry back therefore this explanation to the parable now before us, and take it as a settled point, that the "*sower*" here also, is the Lord Jesus Christ himself.

Then as to the seed which the sower scatters, our Lord explains this, as we find emphatically, in Luke's account. "The seed is *the word of God*." Exactly the kind of seed which we should expect from the hands of such an husbandman. In the parable of the tares in the field, Jesus calls this seed "*good seed*." The seed which he sows is always *good*. Whatever be the result of the sowing—however some may fall on ground where no fruit is ever brought to perfection—this is not the fault of the seed. It is *good* seed. Or, as the Apostle Peter speaks of it, "*the incorruptible* seed" of the "living God." As the "word of God," it must be good, whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear—whether they will listen and receive, or close their ears and reject—whether they are doers of the work, or forgetful hearers. Yet "He abideth faithful." He "can not deny himself." His word is "the word of truth," and, like himself, it "liveth and abideth forever."

See, then, what the great Head of the Church has at his disposal. He has his "good Spirit," and his "good Word." With Him, and Him alone, there rests all power in the Gospel-field. He baptizes "with the *Holy Ghost* and with fire,"—he alone can bestow the *efficient* cause by which dead souls shall live, and barren soil become fertile. He sows "*the good seed*,"—he alone can bestow the *instrumental* cause of spiritual health and life, so as

"by his own will to beget us with *the word of truth*, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures."

Now when we look at this parable generally, as given by these evangelists, there is a peculiarity in the language which they use regarding this seed when sown by the great Sower, which must not be passed over without notice. At first sight, there would almost appear to be a confusion in the similitudes, when we lay the different accounts side by side with each other. Thus in the explanation given by Matthew, he always speaks of the different classes as they "*who received*" the seed. Mark, on the other hand, speaks of these classes as "those *who are sown;*" and so also Luke, "*That which fell* among thorns," &c. Now in reality there lies a deep truth under this apparent confusion of the metaphor. "The seed sown, springing up in the earth, *becomes the plant;* it is therefore when sown the representation of the individuals of whom the discourse is." (Alford.) In other words, whenever the heart of man, under any of the conditions placed before us in the parable, is brought into contact with the Word of God—when according to the similitude, the seed falls on the ground, then, from that time, it must be regarded in reference to its reception or rejection of that word—its fruitfulness or barrenness in connection with that word. It can no longer be considered simply in its former condition. A message has been brought to it. An offer made to it. What is it then *after* this has been done? It is plain that this question may be answered, either by describing the perverse action or otherwise of the heart regarding that which has been sent, or by describing the results of that action as they appear. And so this is just what the evangelists have done in this parable. The one speaks of the different soils, as marking the inner cause or action which brings about the various results. The other speaks of these results themselves. The one tells of the *ground*—the other tells of the *plant* springing from the ground, the result of the inner action on the seed sown.

Let us then proceed to gather from this parable, the different kinds of reception which the good word of God has at the hands of sinful men. The grand leading distinctions between the various "hearers" of mankind are given us very clearly. The one is often found to run into the other, but it is of the utmost importance to regard them in their distinctive characteristics.

We have then, *first* the *wayside* hearer—"*when he sowed, some fell by the wayside, and the fowls came and devoured them up.*" The explanation given by our Lord himself is—"When any one heareth the word of the kingdom and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the wayside." The ground here spoken of, was probably the hard beaten path on which the sower was walking, as he scattered his seed. The seed does not sink into it at all. It lies for a moment on the surface, and then the fowls of the air devour it. Now this forcibly represents to us the case of the man who hears the word, but "understands" it not. That is, he does not in the least appreciate its excellence. He may understand what it *means*, but he does not in the least understand the urgent necessity of his immediately receiving and keeping it. He may know all *about* it; but he understands so little of its value, that he suffers it to lie exposed to the first temptation, to be trodden down or snatched away. This is the true secret of the wayside hearer. He may have nothing to say against the excellence of the word itself. Nay, he may give it all praise and commendation. He may assent to its evidences, and admire its precepts—*but* he blindly refuses to see the direct and immediate interest which he has in it, and so he recklessly suffers it to pass away from him as quickly as it came.

St. Luke adds an emphatic word in the description of the wayside hearer—"*It was trodden down.*" This is one of the first and most certain effects produced in consequence of the hard heart refusing to let the seed penetrate into it; or, as above, to "understand it." The good word of God is exposed to the scorn and contempt of others by it. Every man who turns carelessly away and gives no entrance into his heart of that which is offered to him by the goodness and the love of God, is just doing all he can to add to the contempt which a wicked world regards all God's mercies. He exposes that to be trodden under foot, which he ought to have cherished in his own breast. He has lent his aid to "put the Son of God unto an open shame."

And how terribly does the dark shadow of the Prince of darkness—the prince of the power of the air, again come down here on the parabolic scenery! The three Evangelists mark him out with fearful distinctness, "Then cometh *the wicked one*"—"*Satan*"

—"*the devil.*" He who in the natural heart has been truly represented as dwelling in it as his own home—considering it as his palace, and as a strong man holding his goods in peace within it, is now seen in his bitter hostility against the Prince of the kingdom of light. All his efforts were in vain to prevent the entrance and glorious triumph of Emmanuel in this world. "The stronger than he" overcame him, but again and again he returns to the assault of the unhappy race for whom Christ died; and as this great and gracious Being scatters the good seed of the word, "which is able to make wise unto salvation," he is ever at hand to catch up and snatch away all good and holy impressions, if but for a moment the careless heart suffers them to lie upon the surface. The expression, "*fowls of the air*," most aptly brings before us this hateful work of Satan. His *breath* of temptation. His *rapidity* of movement. His *sudden* assault, so that the soul hardly knows what it has had and lost. The deadly spite which leads the enemy of all righteousness to do this, is given by Luke, "*lest* they should *believe* and be saved." Modern Theologians and Tractarians may talk loudly of their forms and their ceremonies—of their fonts and their altars—their crucifixes and their candles—while they sneer at bibliolatry and "preaching *the word*." But Satan knows better than they. He will give them all these things which their souls lust after, and make them heartily welcome to much more too, if they will only allow him to snatch away *the word*, as seed after seed of it falls upon the heart by the wayside; for he well knows that all these things have never saved, and can never save a soul—but he knows equally well that the word really received into the heart, is followed by *believing* "*unto salvation.*"

Turn now to the second class of hearers as described in this parable. "*Some fell on stony places, where they had not much earth.*" Luke expresses it, "*Some fell on a rock.*" And this is the real meaning of the words in Matthew—"*rocky* ground"—a rock, with merely a thin layer of soil on the surface. In this case the seeds enter partly into the soil. "*Forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth.*" Quickly up, they as quickly disappeared. "*When the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.*" Here the heart is as hard, or harder than in the first class; but there is a thin covering of outside profession. And so when the word comes, it is apparently received

with much joy. Much eagerness is displayed—many good resolutions formed—much emotion felt—and great promises of future growth. Note that word in the parable—"*Forthwith* it sprang up, *because* it had no deepness." True in nature as in grace. The rock under a thin layer of earth may, by the heat which it reflects, stimulate the seed into a rapid growth. The heart which remains hard and unconverted, is just that which, if there be a momentary profession of religion which is agreeable to it for a time, so that it receives it with joy, will make the most rapid *show* of what it has got. It will stimulate the growth of outward seeming with amazing rapidity. But such a man has "no root in himself." The word has never gone down into his heart. The roots lie along in the profession of the man, not in the man himself. And so, no wonder if, "in time of temptation, he falls away." When any thing arises to prove him—to try of what character his reception of the word is—no wonder that he is offended. Just as the sun soon scorches the plant whose roots are only on the surface of a rock, and thus lack moisture, so the practical things of Christianity—the cross-bearing after Christ—the denial of self, and the confessing him before men—the strong light and heat of the Sun of righteousness—soon prove the utter lack of grace at the root of the profession, and shrivel it up into a dead and worthless thing.

Mark the *third* class of hearers, "*And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprung up and choked them.*" There is more reality in this class than in either of the former. The seed of the word penetrates more deeply; but, alas! it is so mingled with other things which exercise an all-powerful sway over the feelings and affections, that it is rendered useless and unprofitable. How pointed is the description given in Mark's account of this class. "They hear the word, and the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things *entering in*, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful." They do not with hardened hearts reject the word, or endeavor to keep it out. On the contrary, they are conscious of its great importance, and welcome it as something which they require, and the growth of which is essential for them in time and in eternity; but *with* this there *enter* in, at the same time, these things—"cares of this world, deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things;" or, as Luke

has it, "cares, and riches, and pleasures of life." And all these are so strong and luxuriant in their growth—they have so much in common with the natural soil of the heart, that they rapidly spring up, and long ere the good seed can bring forth fruit unto perfection, they "*choke* it"—render it feeble and attenuated—destroy its vigor, and cover the life and conversation with the weeds of vanity. Let not these expressions in two of the gospels be omitted—first, these lusts of other things "*entering in*," (Mark,) that is, with the seed. And, "the thorns sprung up *with it*," (Luke,) and "choked it." The very knocking at the door of the heart by the preaching of the word, often opens it to the entering in of these "other things." Men warm for a little moment at the sound of the Gospel, and then the rein is given to their desires on the mountains of vanity. And if there should be any appearance of growth of the good seed afterward—if serious thoughts begin to intrude, and the calls of truth and love begin in some measure to be felt, then those "other things" without loss of time spring up *with* these—the natural heart takes alarm, and soon drowns thought and anxiety for the future by "the cares, the riches, and the pleasures of the present."*

One other class still remains. "*But others fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundred-fold, some sixty-fold, some thirty-fold.*" One evangelist reports to us that this means those "who hear the word and *understand* it"—the very reverse of the wayside hearers. The latter are utterly ignorant of the true value of the word, and of the urgent necessity for them to receive it—the former feel it to be all-important for them. They understand that the "entering in of the word giveth life," and so they are never at rest until it has been received into their hearts and is kept safely in their bosoms. St. Luke's words are very remarkable in describing this class. He says they are such as "in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience." They do not let it be snatched

* "This class is not confined to the *rich*. Πλοῦτος in Scripture, is not riches *absolutely*, as possessed, but riches *desired*. Here there is a divided will, a half-service which ever ends in the prevalence of evil over good."—(Alford.) What an affecting example have we of this class—the choking of the seed, the unfruitfulness, and the condemnation, in the case of Ananias and Sapphira, who "kept back part of the price," and "lied unto God!"

away as the first do—they "*keep it.*" They may make less show and profession than the second or the third, but "*they bring forth fruit with patience.*" They receive it in an "honest and good heart;" in other words, a heart prepared for this precious seed. This preparation does not appear in this parable: we shall have to notice it in a subsequent one. It is not the subject of this. The present has simply to do with the scattering of the word of life by the Son of man upon the hearts of men, and the manifest and clearly-seen results of this. When therefore the seed is seen to take deep root downward, and to spring up and bear much fruit upward, *then*, when that is seen, there is the mark of an "honest and good heart," just as the springing up of the seed scattered by the sower, and bearing an hundred, sixty, or thirty-fold, proves that it has fallen, not on barren, or hard, or uncultivated ground, but on soil prepared before for the reception of it.

On the whole, we may remark three things, as regards the first three classes. The first rejects at once. The second not so speedily. The third still less so. If we attempted to distinguish between the guilt of these several rejections, we might almost affirm that it is in the inverse ratio of their order here. It has been also forcibly remarked, that "the first is more the fault of *careless, inattentive* CHILDHOOD; the second of *careless, shallow* YOUTH; the third of *worldly, self-seeking* AGE." Again, just as we have three different kinds and degrees of sin, in rejecting the word, so we have three degrees given us of fruitfulness under it, "an hundred-fold, sixty-fold, thirty-fold." It is not enough for us merely to watch and pray, lest we be found hard, rocky, or weedy ground; but it ought to be the unceasing study of our life to bring forth the "hundred-fold," nay more, to bring *that* forth "unto perfection"—not only *much* fruit as regards the quantity, but the *best* fruit as regards the quality.

We have, therefore, in the parable before us very striking examples of the reception of the "*word* which by the Gospel is preached unto us." And the solemn lesson to be gained from it is expressed by St. Luke in a single sentence—"TAKE HEED HOW YE HEAR: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have."

We go on now to consider the next parable in this series, and

for reasons which will presently be advanced, in doing so, we break in upon the order and sequence of the parables as given by Matthew after that of the sower.

"*And Jesus said, so is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.*"—Mark iv. 26–29.

This parable is peculiar to Mark. There is unquestionably great difficulty in ascertaining the exact purport of one portion of it, and this difficulty is probably increased by the apparent isolation of the parable, or rather from its being too much regarded by itself, in consequence of being found only in Mark.

The great difficulty is as to the sower. If we conclude that he represents the Lord Jesus himself, then the question arises, how can it be said of him that the seed springs and grows up "*he knows not how?*" On the other hand, if we take the sower to mean the servants of Christ, then truly the parable answers well as regards them, that the seed groweth they "*know not how;*" but then a still greater difficulty remains, for the parable closes thus, —"*When the fruit is brought forth, immediately* HE (the sower) *putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.*" The latter is no doubt the more perplexing difficulty of the two.

Now, in looking at the position which this parable occupies in Mark's Gospel, it seems very obvious that it was delivered by our Lord to his disciples privately, and that immediately after the parable of the sower. Matthew has omitted it, probably because he only meant to narrate those which were either delivered to the multitude as they were gathered on the sea-shore, or those which were afterward given when they retired into the house. By comparing the accounts given by the Evangelist, it seems certain that after the delivery of the parable of the sower, there was a pause in the Lord's address to the multitude. The disciples being alone with their Master in the boat, took that opportunity of asking him to explain it. Now, the Evangelist Mark, immediately after closing his account of this explanation of the parable of the sower, with the solemn admonition, "Take heed what ye hear,"

proceeds at once to give this parable—"*And he said*," &c. Assuredly, then, we must regard it as following up the train of thought suggested by the former parable, and yet privately given to the disciples alone. Nor need there be any surprise at this parable being in one Gospel and not in another. This may be said of others; and in truth at the best, there could only be a very limited selection made in the reporting of what Jesus did and said, for otherwise, as St. John says, "I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written."

Even apart from this manifest fact in the history, we might be disposed to regard the same train of thought carried on from the parable of the sower to this, by the identity of the imagery; the sower sowing seed in his field, and then the seed appearing and progressing until it brought forth its ripe grain. And from this last circumstance, namely, the ripening of the grain, we seem to be irresistibly drawn toward the last class in the parable of the sower, in which alone the seed sown attains to maturity and bears fruit. And then when we reflect that it was to his disciples alone he was now speaking—to those who were hearing and understanding and keeping the good word of God, and in the way of bringing forth fruit with patience, then it does appear more than probable, that the parable now before us was uttered to the disciples, in further elucidation of the *good* seed sown on "*good* ground."

Keeping this connection steadily in view, we shall find that this parable does indeed add most important and instructive reflections to that which goes before, and likewise that the difficulty referred to above, is greatly diminished, if not entirely removed. The words in which Mark narrates the explanation of the last class in the parable of the sower, are "such as hear the word of God, and *receive* it." All the other classes *reject* it. This last *receives* it. Well, it is the more complete history of this *reception* which is given in the parable before us—a reception not, be it remembered, into the hearts of individual believers, though it may be with perfect propriety applied to each one of these, but the reception of the good word into the whole body of believers—the one class as distinct from all the others who reject it—the multitude of the faithful of every place, and in all generations of the Christian age, from its commencement to its close. What then do we learn from the parable regarding this class?

"*So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground.*" Delivered as the parable was, *after* that of the sower, and just before that of the tares in the field, we can not do otherwise than conclude that He that "casts seed into the ground" is "*the Son of man.*" It is added of the sower in the parable, that after sowing "*he sleeps, and rises night and day.*" This expression is admitted by the best commentators simply to mean, that after he had scattered his seed, the sower went about his ordinary avocations, while all this time the seed was "*growing and springing up he knew not how.*" Clearly there must be some limitation to these last words. The husbandman does *know* in one sense *how* the seed grows, that is, he knows that it is by the fertilizing power in the earth which has received the seed. He does know, that unless the seed be *in* the earth—and unless that earth be prepared—and specially unless the rain and sun from above are refreshing and warming it, that the seed *can not* grow. This is knowing a great deal. Obviously, then, the words mean simply this, that *his* personal work is ended for the time, when he casts the seed into the ground. Up to that point, he is a direct and immediate agent in the matter. Beyond this, he is not. It is his care and his duty hitherto. Beyond this, another agency must see to it. His own hand is engaged in it so far. He commits it to another afterward. The words, "*he knoweth not how*," can not be strained to any thing further than this.

Again, however, the sower appears in his field. The seed which in spring he had sown, has now passed through its several stages of development and growth, and being ripened by the summer sun is ready for the harvest. The direct *personal* work of him who first sowed, is again seen in his reaping his precious grain—"*When the fruit is brought forth,* (*ripe,* margin,) *immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.*"

Now this very remarkably presents before us the fact of the Lord Jesus Christ personally visiting his church on two occasions. The first of these was, as it were, the seed-time. He made every preparation for the sowing of the field. He spared himself no pains or cost in order to secure perfectly good seed to sow in it. The *word* which he gave was perfect for the purpose he designed, for it was himself—himself as the author of eternal life to all that should believe on him. And this *living* word was set forth,

made known, declared by the *written* word which his servants were ordained by him to publish. Then after having done this, he retired *personally* from the field. He returned within the vail. Having given the word, the good seed, he went away, as he himself declared it was expedient that he should do—leaving the seed to grow and manifest itself during the long and changeful season of this dispensation. But he will again visit his field. He has scattered good seed over it, and he has a right to look for a plentiful increase. He has left it for a time, but it is only to return at the harvest, that he may gather and store up in his heavenly garner all his chosen ones who have sprung up from the merits of his death, and are bearing fruit, some a hundred, some sixty, some thirty-fold.

But while he himself warned his disciples that thus it must be—"It is expedient for you, that I go away;" "I leave the world and go unto the Father;" "Father, I come to thee;" "Now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world;" he joined with this warning the gracious promise that his personal removal from the field was just to make way for the personal presence and work of another. "If I go not away," he says, "the *Comforter* will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." The work of this infinitely gracious and glorious agent would be to "guide into truth;" "to bring all things to remembrance whatsoever Christ hath said;" "to take of what belongs to Christ and show it" unto Christ's people, to "convince the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment."

And here, then, we mark the field of the world under the dispensation of the Spirit, with the word scattered over it by the Divine sower. The Son's personal work is for a time closed on earth. He has prepared the seed and sown it, and he leaves all work now to the operation of the Holy Ghost. So that every proof of vitality in the seed sown, every token that a heart has become instinct with spiritual life, is by the direct application of the written word, through the power of the Holy Ghost, bringing the soul into immediate and blessed fellowship with the living word. Every advancement in spiritual growth, whether it be clear discernment, heavenly-mindedness, or true godliness, is alone the work of the Holy Ghost in bringing more and more clearly before the sinner all that pertains to Christ—causing him

to realize more the glory of his union with him as the living word through the instrumentality of the written word—and, by his various dispensations of grace and mercy, as well as of chastisement and correction, rapidly maturing and preparing him for the heavenly garner, by the warm rays of the Sun of righteousness, and the refreshing influences of the "water of life," conveyed to him by his own personal work. And when all this spiritual process is passed through in the mighty field where the word is sown, when the Spirit has completed and perfected all *his* work of preparation, then shall the Son himself again return to his faithful and longing people, and "receive them unto himself, that where he is, there they may be also."

It is interesting to observe how the *personal* absence of Christ from his church during this dispensation is, in the individual work of grace in the heart of man, exhibited in the parable of the barren fig-tree, where the vine-dresser is the Spirit, and Christ is merely introduced as inquiring into the condition of the tree, but taking no direct hand in its culture—while here in the parable before us, in which the whole history of the church from seed-time to harvest is set forth, the same absence of Christ is pointedly illustrated.

And here, too, we perceive what it is that makes what is called in the parable of the sower, "good ground;" and in the explanation, "an honest and good heart;" or, in the parable now before us, "*the earth bringing forth fruit of herself.*" It is the presence of the Spirit in the temporary absence of Jesus. There can be no good ground—no *honest* reception of seed into the heart—no power of *bringing forth*, unless under the immediate and direct presence of the Holy Ghost. "*The earth of itself*," taken absolutely, can not bring forth fruit. It can only do so as it is brought under such influences as will make it fertile. According to that word in the Hebrews, "The earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringing forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God." So with the heart of man, if the influences of the Spirit are all turned back—if they never penetrate beneath the surface, then no seed can spring up or flourish there. But if it "drink in" the "former and the latter rain" of that Spirit, then it "bringeth forth fruit," and "receiveth blessing from God."

And let the order of these parables be noted. First the sower, and then the seed growing. The very sequence is natural as regards the illustration. Then as to what is meant. The Spirit can not work *before* Christ. It is only because of Christ that he can work at all. Unless Christ had perfected *his* personal work at his first advent, the Spirit could have nothing to do in the field of the world. But, on the other hand, though Christ's work comes first, yet without the Spirit's work it would be of no avail. And just as he has handed over his completed work to be under the sole charge of the Holy Spirit, so the latter will at length give back to Christ his completed work too. Both works needful, and both done. Each dependent on the other—each with a common end in view—and both terminating in "bringing many sons and daughters unto God," justified through the meritorious work of Jesus, and sanctified by the inner operation of the Spirit —*righteously* inheriting by virtue of the one—made forever meet by the power of the other for the glory and the presence of the everlasting Father.—(Appendix E.)

We pass on to another parable, which is closely allied to both of those we have been considering.

"*Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.*"—Matthew xiii. 24–30.

The precise explanation graciously given by our Lord to his disciples of the various particulars in this very remarkable parable, leaves us nothing to desire regarding its scope; and all that remains is to dwell briefly on one or two of these. When the disciples sought to be informed as to this parable, our Lord thus

replied to them—"He that soweth the seed is the Son of man; the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; the enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

Notwithstanding this precious and full explanation of the parable, some have attempted to add to it in some important particulars. Thus, it has been affirmed that while "*the reapers are the angels*," yet that "*the servants*" who first detect the tares in the field are ministers of Christ's church on earth! Now, surely when we look over the explanation given step by step by our Lord himself—noting with the greatest distinctness each successive particular, it is a bold thing to hazard such an assertion as the above. If these servants of the householder are ministers of Christ's church on earth, we may reverently ask the question, Why is there a gap altogether in the explanation regarding them? Specially does the force of this appear, when it is considered that the main drift of the parable depends on the discovery made by these servants, and their desire for immediately uprooting the noxious weeds which had been sown in the field. Why, then, we repeat, when *all* the other matters in the parable are, as it were, placed side by side with the things they represent, why is nothing said of this? If there is truly such a marked distinction in the parable, that the servants mean ministers on earth, and the reapers angels from heaven, is it possible to conceive that this too would not have been declared?

We at once reject all such additions to this explanation, as being not only in the highest degree improbable by the marked silence regarding it, but also because it is altogether uncalled for. The story in the parable speaks for itself. The householder in possession of the good field in which he has sowed good seed has his farm-servants. When these are first introduced they are merely

asking a question—they are not actually engaged in field work, and so they are only called *servants*. At the close of the parable, however, they are engaged in field work, and so they are called "*the reapers*." They are obviously the same parties as are spoken of at first, but are now named "*the reapers*," from the employment in which they appear at last to be engaged. And as our Lord says "the reapers are the angels," we can not come with propriety to any other conclusion than that these "*servants of the householder*" are *angels* too. The double reference, indeed, to these beings in the parable is in exact accordance with what Scripture says regarding them. They are, on the one hand, "ministers (or servants) of God who do his pleasure,"—*that* is their *general* designation. They are likewise a "flame of fire,"—*that* is their *particular* designation when they are specially sent forth by him to execute his wrath. The "*servants of the householder*" were made "*the reapers*." The angelic ministers are made "a flame of fire."

It is no matter of surprise, when such an interpretation of "*the servants*" in the parable is given, that it should be followed up by certain views of other parts very cognate to it. Thus, it has been said, that the field is the visible Church; and that the coming of "*the servants*" to the householder is the surprise and anxiety which ministers of that Church feel when they behold such noxious things as they are compelled to do, growing up within the outward fold, as show plainly they came from the evil one. Moreover, it is added, that when the servants ask, "*Wilt thou, then, that we go and gather them up?*" this is the language of those who have authority to exercise discipline in the Church of Christ, and who, if left to themselves, would with unsparing and probably indiscriminate zeal, seek to cast out, or, in other words, excommunicate from the fold all that offends.

It is hardly possible to conceive any thing more alien to the whole bearing of the parable than these matters. "*The field is not* the visible Church. Our Lord expressly says it is "*the world*;" and yet, with this clear and emphatic statement, so entirely irreconcilable with the view just referred to, many fanciful theories have been propounded as deducible from this parable about the extent and limitation of church-discipline, and so forth! This parable, indeed, was a special battle-ground in the early history of the Church, and is frequently introduced in the controversy which

raged between the Donatists and Augustine, who opposed them on the orthodox side. That controversy was very similar to some modern ones—whether it is or is not the duty of the members of the visible Church to exclude every one from their communion who does not bring forth the fruits of righteousness? The Donatists said it was; Augustine said it was not. The latter adduced this parable in support of his view. The former evaded the force of it by affirming what is in itself true, that the field is "*the world*," not the Church. But the truth is, the parable does not help either side. It does, indeed, indirectly prove the Donatists to have been in error, because it sets forth the state of Christ's Church during the whole of this dispensation as mingled wheat and tares; but it says not a word about the discipline, more or less, which may or ought to be used in order to purify the visible Church from corrupt membership, or whether all such discipline should indeed be let alone. It is the attempt to make "*the servants*" in the parable ministers of the Church on earth which has introduced such confusion into the explanation, and brought in matters entirely irrelevant to the figure employed.

Let us start from the firm ground of our Lord's own words—"*The field is the world.*" "Go ye into all *the world* (the same word as in the parable), and preach the Gospel unto every creature." Such is the field; the material world, or the whole race of mankind taken simply in its natural, worldly sense. When the Saviour gave the glorious commission to his servants, just mentioned, then did the Son of man "*sow good seed in his field.*"

Now, observe a remarkable change here from the parable of the sower. It is *the word* which is there said to be sown. Here it is "*the children of the kingdom.*" The reason for this change is obvious. In the former parable Jesus meant to show the reception of his Word by the heart of man under its great leading varieties. In the latter he means to show the history in the world of those who have received his Word into their hearts, and so become "*the children of the kingdom.*" This history is comprised in two words. As the husbandman sowed his *good seed* in his field, so Christ places his beloved ones in the world, throughout it, spreads them over it, as the "salt of the earth," and the "light of the world." *And*, as the husbandman found tares mingled with his wheat, so Christ finds evil men who profess to be "*children of*

the kingdom," and *appear* in the midst of "*the world*" as such, but who in reality are "*the children of the evil one.*" And so the whole figure assumes its proper and simple form. The field is "the world." "The wheat with the tares" is the visible Church of Christ *in* the world, having the "evil mingled with the good."

We are further told how this state of things came about. Not, be it observed, evil in the world, for that prevailed in the world long before, but evil within the Church in the world. "*While men slept, his enemy came, and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.*" "While *men slept*," that is, *at night*, when the deed could be done secretly and stealthily, under cover of the darkness; so were the "*children of the evil one*" stealthily introduced among the godly in Christ Jesus. This *mystery* of iniquity began to work even in apostolic days, and was not long before it showed in its revelation how busily the enemy had been engaged. "The enemy" is "the Devil." Again, we are brought in sight of this great adversary. In the parable of the sower we see him on the watch to catch away if possible the living word from the hearts of poor sinners, lest they should believe and be saved. Here he is craftily and secretly introducing such evil men within the profession of the Gospel as he trusts may spread death not life in the world, and destroy the growth of the kingdom of light. How emphatic are the words, "*and went his way.*" This is a kind of work in which it is for his interest to be as little *seen* as possible. His object is to fill the world with evil children, but they must have the appearance of the children of light. They must be his in heart, but they must be Christ's in name. They must be really dead, but they must appear to live. They must be barren and accursed, but they must have the semblance of good and profitable seed. So, after having done his utmost to attain this end, he keeps out of sight, he retires into the back-ground, satisfied with leaving a seed behind him who *call* Jesus *Lord*, but in works deny him.

When at length the work of this enemy appeared, "*the servants of the householder came and said unto him*," &c. We have already denied the accuracy of the view which makes these "*servants*" mean ministers of Christ's church on earth. One reason we have already given, and it is sufficient in itself. Others remain. What is said of the mingled growth of wheat and tares in the field, applies to ministers, and to those having authority in the visible

church, as well as others. The evil is mingled with the good *there*, even as in the body of the church at large. (2 Corinthians xi. 13–15.) To make *them* apply, therefore, to their Master under such circumstances, is, to say the least, a most incongruous explanation of the parable. And this incongruity is greatly heightened by putting such words as these into their mouths, "*Wilt thou then, that we go and gather them up?*" And if the refusal on the part of Christ, "*Nay, let both grow together*," was meant to apply to them, and to the exercise of discipline in the visible church, we know that in the apostolic age, this was not carried out; for we find at least one of the most prominent of the apostolic band, engaged himself, and engaging the other members of the church, "*to put away from among them* that wicked person."

"*The servants*" are the angels of God, who are able to look over the field at a glance, and who, as faithful themselves, are exceedingly jealous for the honor of his name. It is altogether consistent and congruous to the subject in hand, that they should come and seek information about what appears so strangely adverse, as they think, to the progress of that kingdom and the children of it, in which their own future interests are so much involved. They had seen from the beginning the works of Satan in the world; but now there is something new which they do not yet comprehend. Christ has planted his kingdom in the world. He has sown the seed—the precious, the good seed of that kingdom throughout the world. And hardly has he done so, when before the eyes of these angelic servants there appears this strange anomaly—Christians without Christianity—something in the earthly stage of the kingdom of Christ apparently springing out of it, and yet utterly diverse from it. "*From whence then hath it tares?*" How is it possible that these should have arisen? The servants of the householder, when told that an enemy had done this, immediately begged to know whether they should go and at once root up this evil and noxious crop. And here, we have just such another intimation of what angelic minds may feel regarding what passes in this world, as we had in the parable of the prodigal son. Their first impulse is to go at once and take out of Christ's kingdom any thing that offends. They can not endure such dishonor to be cast upon him. They burn with holy jealousy to root out all unbelievers from the field in which the church is passing

through her period of probation. They would do it at once. They would have no delay. But their Master thinks otherwise. He restrains their just and holy ardor. He will not, for wise purposes of his own, allow them to go forth at once against those who have only a "name to live;" but the time is coming when he will send them forth, and then their zeal for the Lord of hosts will clear out of the field every root of bitterness, and destroy every noxious plant. Let it be noted in passing, how this parable is dovetailed into that of the lost son, by what it reveals of the mind and feelings of angels regarding the whole scheme of redemption. *First*, they need to be instructed in, and reconciled to the great work of redemption, as marked by Christ *receiving sinners;* and *next*, they need further instruction in regard to the long preparatory course over which the children of the kingdom must pass before being finally severed from all that is hostile to Christ, and dishonoring to God.

But now as to the *tares* sown in the field. Many discussions have arisen as to whether the plant here spoken of was of such a kind as that the good wheat might *degenerate* into the evil tares; or, on the other hand, the evil tares be *improved* into the good wheat. And then, of course, this application has followed—that if evil men may be changed into, or may become good, so, on the other hand, good men may become evil. Now, in truth, the parable has nothing to do with any such thing at all. This is not a subject in the least within its scope. Whatever be the truth or otherwise, either physically or spiritually, which may be held on this point, *this* parable is altogether independent of it—takes no cognizance of it, and is complete in its great lesson without it. "In the parable, the Lord gathers, as it were, the whole human race into one *life-time*, as they will be gathered in one harvest, and sets forth that as simultaneous, which has been scattered over the ages of time."—(Alford.) And all, then, which he means to convey by this parable, is, that in all ages of the church's history, as a matter *of fact*, the evil will be mingled with the good—the good being the good seed, the evil the bad, and at first sight not readily to be distinguished. And that at the close of this dispensation—the great harvest of the world—this will be found to be so still. But at *that* time, he will see to the entire separation forever of all that is *really* good from all that is *really* bad.

All that we have to do with the plant called "*tare*" in the parable, is to see whether it bears out this manifest intimation, that it might at certain periods of its growth be *mistaken for* wheat. This is the special point in the parable—the resemblance of the wheat and tares at first, the time when the difference began to be descried, and yet the danger at that time of endeavoring to root them up and cast them out of the field. The researches of scientific men have settled this matter. The *tare* in the parable is unquestionably a plant, which in its first growth and development, bears a very strong and marked resemblance to wheat in the same stage of growth. So much, indeed, is this the case, that it needs a very practiced eye to discover some minute features which indicate the different classes to which these plants belong.*

The work of the enemy would not then appear at once. The parable tells us when it was that it did appear, "*When the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.*" Mark that the tares are meant here to be in the same stage of development. The *fruit* had begun to appear in both. Now this is just the stage at which the plant, which botanists consider to be the *tares* of Scripture, displays its entire distinctiveness from the wheat. As soon as the fruit appears, the plant is *known*. And so it has been, and ever will be, in the history of the visible Church. Only "by *their fruits* shall ye *know* them." No other means for any one but Jehovah himself to know who are his, and who are not.

But then, "*the servants*" are forbidden from going at once and gathering up the tares, and for this reason, "*lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them.*" We do not care to deal with the notion which has been sometimes advanced in explanation of the danger which would be incurred by presently uprooting the tares, namely, that the roots of the plants might be so far mingled with each other, as that violence to the one would be fatal to the other—and so making it in some way or another necessary for the righteous in this world, that the evil should not be violently taken from among them. This is altogether unsatisfactory and alien to the point at issue. The great thing is the final separation of the evil and the good. "The *Lord knoweth*

* I have great satisfaction in referring to Appendix F for an admirable note on this subject from my excellent friend the Professor of Botany in the University of Edinburgh.

them that are his," but his judgment, his separation at last, will be according to works, according to that done in the body, whether good or bad. Now he will not suffer his angels at once to proceed against the evil in his visible Church, because the time has not arrived when the full manifestation of fruit of both kinds will clearly *show* who are his, and who are not; and therefore even they might make mistakes in the matter.

An expression in the parable of the "seed in its growth," seems to suggest the true meaning of this part of the parable now before us. Speaking of the growth previous to harvest, our Lord says, "First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." Now this is just what we may see in any field of grain. There is ever this gradual development; and more than this, we shall invariably find different plants at different stages of this development. While one is nearly "the full corn in the ear," another will be only as far on as "the ear," another not so far, only "the blade." Now in the parable before us, the time mentioned when the servants made the discovery, was when "*the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit.*" In other words, some of the most advanced of the plants began to show distinctly what their true character was, either wheat or tares. But many would be yet a stage or two behind. The real distinctiveness derived from the first *appearance* of fruit could not yet be detected in them, and *hence* the danger of attempting at *that* period to root out the tares. This could only be done with safety at the extreme period of harvest, when the time for the sickle had come, and when every plant in the field would then show itself of what kind of seed it was.

And so the whole lesson of this solemn parable lies before us. God at present pauses in his judgment on those who, with an outward profession, yet are none of his in heart. He *waits* until, over the whole field of the world, and during the entire history of the Church, such distinct and tangible evidence shall be produced as to "the children of the kingdom," and "the children of the evil one," that the angels whom he shall send forth to gather out of his kingdom all those that offend, can not possibly misunderstand their work, for then, as they cast the wicked into the furnace of fire, even as tares into the burning, "*the righteous shall shine* (before them) *in the kingdom of their Father.*"

CHAPTER II.

THE MUSTARD-SEED—THE TREASURE IN THE FIELD—THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE—THE DRAG-NET.

THE following parables still further illustrate the history of the progress of the Gospel in the world, and its reception by man.

"*Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard-seed, which a man took and sowed in his field: which indeed is the least of all seeds; but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.*"—Matthew xiii. 31, 32.

In the parable of the sower, the seed scattered yielded a return to the husbandman in only one of the four kinds of soil on which it fell. This by itself might have left an impression on the minds of Christ's hearers, that his Gospel must be deficient in power, if it proved successful in only one out of four classes of mankind. The work of the enemy in the parable of the tares might have rather strengthened, than otherwise, this impression. So in this parable he sets before the people the inherent power of the "kingdom of heaven." It may seem at first to find little acceptance with man. It may have its "day of small things." It may, by the permission of the Prince of the kingdom, encounter a long-continued effort of the enemy, either to make it of none effect, or to overrun it with the worthlessness of a hollow and counterfeit profession. Nevertheless, amid all these tokens of apparent weakness, this shall be its history. Small and insignificant at first, indeed, to outward sense—begun by a man, ignominiously crucified, with a few illiterate followers, having no countenance or support from the ordinary forces of the world, it has yet daily become greater and greater, and at length it shall

be for shelter to all the inhabitants of the earth. This is manifestly the purport of the imagery in this parable. It sets forth the inherent power in the kingdom of heaven to strike its roots deeply in the earth, to grow in spite of all obstacles, to "stretch forth its boughs unto the sea, and its branches unto the river," until the whole earth shall gladly seek for and find protection under its shadow. This parable assures us of the outward glory and triumph of the Messiah's kingdom in the earth. It is the representation of all those glorious promises regarding his "government and peace" in the world. It places before us in a lively and striking figure such truths as these—"The earth shall be covered with the knowledge of the glory of God, even as the waters cover the sea,"—"All shall know me, from the least to the greatest." It marks the sure progress from the manger in the stable at Bethlehem, with a new-born infant lying there, "because there was no room for him in the inn," to that other day when there shall be "great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of the world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign on the earth." Then shall the lowly one, who as an "infant of days" was "despised and rejected of men," esteemed "small and of no reputation," and who, in apparent weakness, hung dead upon the cross, then shall that very Being "have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth." If for a time "the world" has been, by his wise permission, partly overrun by tares, he will take care that at length all such offenses shall be cast forth, and in "*his field*" still will be gathered "all the kindreds of the people" to rest under the shadow of that kingdom which is "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."*

"*Another parable spake he unto them: The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.*"—Matt. xiii. 33.

The parable of the mustard-seed represents "*the inherent of self-developing power* of the kingdom of Heaven as a seed containing in itself the principles of expansion; this, of the *power which it possesses of penetrating and assimilating a foreign mass* till all be taken up into it."—(Alford.)

* See Appendix G, for some remarks by Professor Balfour, regarding the plant referred to in this parable.

These two parables have often been regarded as representing one and the same aspect of truth, namely, the gradual progress from the small beginnings of the kingdom of Christ up to its perfect development and establishment. But nothing can be more mistaken than such a view. The bearing of each parable is perfectly distinct from the other. The first has to do with the open, manifest triumph and glory of Messiah's kingdom, with the nations of the earth finding a safe and a happy shelter under its universal dominion. The other shows that coextensive with this, there is proceeding an inward process of "*penetrating and assimilating*," so that the dwellers under the shadow of the kingdom shall also have it "within them." Just as the tree of righteousness, planted by the love and watered by the sufferings of Christ, is advancing to its glorious maturity, so is regeneration and sanctification by every means of grace constantly proceeding in the souls of his people, and when the perfect consummation of his work *for* them shall be at length made manifest, his perfect work *in* them shall be completed too. "*The whole shall be leavened.*"*

The parables we have just been considering were, equally with those of the sower and the tares, delivered by our Lord to the multitude on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. Those which we are now to look into were delivered by him to his disciples alone, after he had retired into the house, (ver. 38.) And bearing this in mind we shall the more readily perceive the main scope of what was uttered under these circumstances.

* I have not thought it necessary to notice here the opinion that "the leaven" in this parable is symbolic of pollution and corruption, and therefore that the parable refers to the progress of corruption and deterioration in the outward visible Church. Let the following remarks suffice for this view. "But, then, how is it said that the *kingdom of heaven is like* this leaven? Again, if the progress of the kingdom of heaven be *toward corruption, till the whole is corrupted,* surely there is an end of all the blessings and healing influences of the Gospel in the world. It will be seen that such an interpretation can not for a moment stand on its *own* ground, but much less when we connect it with the parable preceding."—(Alford.) I add the following admirable remark by the same writer regarding the woman and the *three measures of meal.* "As to whether the γυνή has any especial meaning (*though I am more and more convinced that such considerations are not always to be passed by as nugatory*), it will hardly be of much consequence here to inquire, seeing that γυναικες σιτοποιοί would be every where a matter of course. 'The three measures,' an ephah, appears to have been the usual quantity prepared for a baking.—(See Gen. xviii. 6; Judges, vi. 19; 1 Sam. i. 24.)"

"*Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field: the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.*"—Matt. xiii. 44.

Hitherto our Lord had spoken of the kingdom of heaven in its reception among men, and its external and internal process, in respect of the power with which that kingdom itself operates. Thus it is *good seed* cast into the ground, and then springing up. It is also a grain of mustard-seed, becoming at length a tree; and also it is leaven pervading the mass into which it is introduced, until the whole is leavened. Now, however, Jesus represents this reception of the kingdom of heaven under another aspect, namely, the eagerness of men to possess it, when they come to know its value. He shows to his disciples, who were already, by his Spirit, earnestly seeking after that kingdom, that in the matter of its reception, men were not acted on, as if merely inert and passive, like the soil of the earth, but they were eagerly desirous to obtain that which, by the Spirit, they had discovered to be "unsearchable riches," and unspeakably precious.

The parable before us illustrates the case of the man who makes an unexpected discovery of the inestimable value of what the Gospel of the kingdom is; and who, when he has once done so, strains every nerve, gives himself no rest, until he can call that precious treasure his own. Our Lord took the similitude from a very common occurrence in Eastern countries, both in ancient and modern times, where the insecurity of property is proverbial. It was and is no unusual thing, for men of wealth to divide their property into three parts; one part to be invested in the daily transactions of commerce; a second converted into precious stones, which might be easily secreted about the person and carried away on any emergency; and the third buried in some secret place known only to the owner. It has frequently happened, that the owner has never returned to recover his property; and thus another, often very unexpectedly, has lighted on "*the hid treasure.*" Our Lord supposes such a case, and as the law then in force in Judea would make the present proprietor of the field in which the treasure lay the legal possessor of the latter, this man is said, as soon as he made the discovery, "*to sell all that he hath, and to buy the field,*" in order that he may possess the treasure.

Observe, our Lord merely takes such a case as frequently oc-

curred, as the similitude of the truth he wished to inculcate As to the honesty or otherwise of the man in the matter, we have nothing to do. It is no more intended that we should act upon the *principle* which influenced *him*, than we are to act upon the *principle* which influenced the unjust steward. Just as in the latter case, it is the man's *shrewdness*, not his dishonesty, that is the lesson; so in the parable before us, it is the man's eager desire to obtain at every cost the "*treasure in the field*," which is the lesson, not the craft and cunning by which he attained his end.

What, then, does the "*treasure hid in the field*" mean? It can not mean what the field in the former parables does—"*the world.*" There is no treasure in *that* field worth the buying; neither can it be, in any sense, said of any one, that he "*bought the world.*" Neither can it mean "the Church," as some would have it, for the Church has no such treasure in her which can thus be taken possession of. She may tell of such treasure, and point to where it is to be found—the faithful may tell where they themselves have found it, but they will say as Paul did, "We neither received it of man, neither were we taught it, but by revelation of Jesus Christ." Besides, how can it ever be said with any propriety, that as the man in the parable *bought* the field for the treasure, so also he who seeks for the Gospel treasure must possess himself *of the Church*, in order to obtain the treasure! Surely it is enough to state this view plainly, in order to condemn it.

The "*field*" in this parable is the same which is set forth in the parable of the sower by "the seed." It is "*the word of God.*" When the direct power and energy of the word upon the sinner's heart is intended to be shown, then it is *good* seed sown on good ground, springing up and bearing fruit. When it is the sinner's eager desire to possess that word with all its hid treasure, to give up all, in order to obtain it—then it is "*a field*" in which "*a treasure is hid.*" Now mark the process illustrated here. The written word of God lies before the sinner as the field in the parable lay before the man. It does not yet *belong* to him. He looks at it—he may labor in one sense in it—but as long as he is unconverted, as long as his desires are "earthly, sensual, devilish," he has "no part or lot in the matter;" and as long as this state lasts, he has no desire to possess it. There is nothing, as it appears to him, so precious in it, as to make him "*sell all that he has*," in order to get

it. But let the Spirit of God "reveal Christ" to that sinner's soul, awake him to a sense of sin, a need of pardon, a fear of hell, and a hope of heaven, by showing him "the Lamb of God,"—*then* he has made the great discovery of the treasure which the field contains —of what the Scriptures hold, "they are they which testify of *me*." And so he never rests until he has really and spiritually made himself possessor of that which "is the testimony of Jesus." He must have as his own, and at every cost, the *written* word, because of the living word within it.

See, moreover, what he does when he makes the discovery of Christ in his Word. "*He hideth it.*" This is the only way in which he can secure possession of it. "Thy Word have I *hid* within my heart." "Thy words were found, and I did eat them," that in the inner process of spiritual life, known only to God and the soul, the latter might appropriate to itself the "unsearchable riches of Christ." Then "*for joy thereof he goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.*" Mark well, this does not mean the believer *buying* his *salvation*. He has not a farthing wherewith to attempt to do *that*. The treasure in the field of the Word is already a *bought* salvation—a salvation purchased not with "corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ." It is this which makes it so infinitely valuable, so gloriously precious; and when, therefore, the sinner sells all that he has in order to buy this, it means that "what things *were* gain to him," these he must now "count loss for Christ;" and he must be ready to "suffer the loss of all things, that he may *win* Christ," God's unspeakable gift.

And so we pass on to the next parable.

"*Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant-man seeking goodly pearls; who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.*"—Matt. xiii. 45, 46.

In the former parable, we have the case of a man who, without any previous heart-searching, is suddenly brought face to face with the Gospel treasure, and so becomes eager to obtain it. The case of the woman at the well of Samaria is a remarkable example of such. In this, on the contrary, we have the case of a man so far enlightened, so far awakened, as to have become thoroughly dissatisfied with his own condition, and who has received strong impressions of the odiousness of sin, and of the beauty of holiness.

One who feels that he can not sit still, and make no effort after what is good. He is conscious of his need, and sincerely sets about endeavoring to get what he wants. He is seeking "*goodly pearls.*" The grace of God leads him to discover the one "*pearl of great price,*" even Jesus Christ. He had been searching for "*pearls,*" for *many* ornaments. He finds *one*, worth more than them all. In other words, when the awakened soul is sincerely and really desirous to put on "whatsoever things are lovely, honest, just, pure, or of good report," then he discovers that in Christ every such precious thing is to be found. He discovers that if he obtains Christ he gets "all things" besides—that if he "put on Christ" it is the certain and the only way in which he can put away what is vile and unworthy, and be clothed with such a salvation as shall not only be a covering for him in the way of pardon, but shall be glorious apparel, in which he may walk adorned with all the gifts and the graces of the Spirit of God. When Paul said, "to me to *live* is *Christ,*" he showed that he had parted with every thing, and made the "*pearl of great price*" his own. And just, then, as in the "*treasure hid in the field,*" we have the believer hiding the precious word with Christ in it within his heart, as his heritage forever; so in this latter parable we have the believer setting forth the preciousness and glory of Christ before men, wearing this "*pearl of great price*" as his unspeakably costly ornament, and so "adorning the doctrine of God his Saviour in all things."

"*Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.*"—Matt. xiii. 47–50.

While this parable is identical with that of the *tares in the field* in two points, namely, the permitted mingling of good and evil within the outward Church *on earth*, and the final and complete separation of these in the day of the Lord—at the end of the *world*, as it is called in both, but more properly the end of the *age*, or the present dispensation;—the aspect under which these are presented to us is perfectly different in the two parables. A brief

examination of this one will suffice to show the points of difference.

It is not a *field* now in which seed is sown, but the *sea* into which a net is cast. From this we gather an important distinction between the general bearing of the two parables, while each closes with the separation of the good from the evil. The parable of the tares intimates to us that the ungodliness of mere profession will be *seen* to be mingled more or less with the reality of true godliness during the progress of this age or dispensation. The parable before us indicates another view of the matter. The net is cast in, and as "*it gathers of every kind*," its operation is out of sight. The end will show *what* it is gathering; but as it is dragged along it is *under* the water, and so out of view.

The same Being, likewise, who is mentioned in the former, is implied in this. "The Son of man," who is represented as if "sowing good seed in a field," must be regarded here as if "*casting a net into the sea*." But the imagery of the two parables suggests a widely different application. In the parable of the tares in the field we see the representation of the *vital* power of the Word in "the children of the kingdom." They are the "good seed," because with prepared hearts they have received the Word and keep it. In the parable now before us we behold the *judicial* power of the Word in retaining its hold on every one with whom it is brought into contact, unto the judgment of the great day.

How solemn is the lesson thus taught! The Lord Jesus has given his Word. In other words, he has himself announced his Gospel message, preached the kingdom of heaven, and, by his ministering servants he never ceases to call attention to this fact. This, then, is as if a man "*cast a net into the sea*." To whomsoever that Gospel comes, it never leaves him. From that moment he never can shake himself loose from its power. It takes fast hold of him, and he never can escape from it. He may appear in outward things just as he appeared before. Men may mark no difference in him. They may be as little aware of a change of condition in him as a man standing on the shore is ignorant of what may be inclosed in a net which is being drawn, but in reality he has become inclosed within the meshes of a net which is dragging him irresistibly along. Whether for good or for evil—whether for acquittal or condemnation—whether to be gathered

among the pure in heaven, or cast among the guilty in hell, he can not arrest his progress for an instant toward the judgment to which he is being carried from the first moment when the offer of salvation in the Gospel was made to him.

How different the condition of the two parties involved in this mighty net cast into the sea! The one good, the other bad. The one "the children of the kingdom," the other "the children of the evil one." The one carried on toward everlasting life, the other dragged toward everlasting death. Truly as the prophet has it, "Thy word shall not return unto thee *void*." When as a net it is at length "*brought to shore*," it will be "*full;*" and then shall the angels of God "*come forth*," summoned now to cast out all evil from the communion of the kingdom, and sever the wicked from among the just; and then shall the Apostle's words be fully verified that the Gospel message must be either "a savor of life unto life, or of death unto death." Reader, bear well in mind that the Gospel of Christ is like the pillar on the shore of the Red Sea, which had its bright side for the Israelite, its dark and threatening one for the Egyptian. So is the Gospel to you. If you will not have it in one way, it will inwrap you in gloom in another. If it is not your salvation it will become your condemnation. If it does not give life, it will deepen the horrors of eternal death. It will not let you go without a blessing or a curse. "How shall you escape" the last, if you despise the first?

PART V.

CHRIST'S WORK OF GRACE IN ITS HISTORICAL AND PROPHETICAL CHARACTER.

SECT. II.—THE CALLING AND CASTING AWAY OF THE JEW, AND THE CALLING AND BRINGING IN OF THE GENTILE.

CHAPTER I.

THE GREAT SUPPER.

In the last section we have had a wide field of contemplation spread before us, regarding the reception of the Gospel generally by those to whom it is sent, and the progress of that Gospel itself from the time that it was given by the Son of man until the day when it shall bring before him for final judgment and separation all who have come within its mighty influence. We now turn to another view of Christ's work of grace, as it appears in its historical and prophetical character, and that with special reference to the Jew and the Gentile.

"*A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: and sent his servant at supper-time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I can not come. So that servant came, and showed his lord these things. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet*

there is room. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper."—Luke xiv. 16–24.

Allusion has already been made in these pages to the occasion on which this parable was delivered. Our Lord was at the "house of one of the chief Pharisees." Most probably guests of distinction sat down with him to eat bread, for the anxiety he observed among them to choose the chief places at the table drew forth the parable of the lowest room. This is still more manifest from what he said directly to his host (verses 12–14).

When our Lord referred to "the resurrection of the just," one who sat at meat with him cried out, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God." The Jews entertained the expectation that the resurrection of the just would be ushered in by a great and glorious festival, and it is most probable that this man with a low and carnal view of the Messiah's kingdom altogether, "spoke these words," as Trench remarks, "with a very easy and comfortable assurance that he should make one of them that should thus eat bread in the kingdom of God." As a Jew he looked upon himself as belonging to the favored band who should be present at the festival in the kingdom of God. He took it for granted. To instruct and warn him as well as the rest our Lord put forth the parable before us.

The last verse we have quoted gives us the key to the parable. "I say unto *you*" (ὑμῖν). Now, in the parable there are only *two* persons introduced, the householder and his servant, as conversing about the supper. These words, then, can not be meant as if spoken by the man in the parable to his servant, but they are the words of Christ to those around the table with him at the time.

"I say unto *you*." And he thus at once gives us to understand, that *he* is "*the man who made a great supper, and bade many*," and that the supper to which he invited guests was the Gospel—that "feast of fat things" of which the prophets had written.

Bearing this in view, the parable is most impressive. Our Lord was then an invited guest at the table of a chief Pharisee, surrounded by others of the same class, who were most willingly present. He tells them in the parable then, that he also has made a great supper and has bidden many. And he puts it to their

hearts and consciences whether they have as cordially attended to *his* invitation, as they did to their host at whose table they were then sitting. The *point* with which this appeal was made will appear as we consider the different parts of the parable in detail.

The parable is based on a custom existing among the Jews in giving entertainments. They first issued their invitations to their guests generally, then on the day appointed they sent out again to them who were invited to call them to the feast. The Master of the Gospel feast in the former dispensation "*bade many.*" He had made all previous preparation for the glorious festival which he had determined to give, and he had made the most clear announcement of his purpose. He spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets. When, however, "the time of the promise drew nigh,"—when the Gospel feast was being really spread, then he sent forth a special message to those who had been invited, "*Come, for all things are now ready.*" This was John the Baptist's summons when he began his ministry in the wilderness of Judea—this was its sum and substance, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

The reception of John's invitation to the Gospel feast, by the "chief Pharisees," the scribes and the rulers of the people, is the first thing with which our Lord deals in the parable. These "sat in Moses' seat," and had authority in the land. They professed to be the guides of the people, and the latter took the law from their lips. What then do they say to the express invitation, now that Gospel times have arrived—"*Come, for all things are now ready?*" This was the natural order to take in showing what consideration Jesus, who "*made the great supper,*" received at the hands of those whom he invited. And it is not uninteresting to bear in mind, that when John came preaching, it was the *Pharisees* who came prominently forward to demand an account of him and of his message. It was markedly with them that the settlement was first to be made regarding the "*supper now ready.*" (John i. 19–24.)

See, then, how these persons received the message—"*They all with one consent began to make excuse.*" Our Lord proceeds to give specimens of the excuses these persons made, which indeed too truly represent the worldly-minded and the self-righteous of all ages, who have no love for the good things of the Gospel. Note

the variety not only of the excuses made by each, but of the terms in which the refusal is couched. The first man has bought "*a piece of ground*," and "*he must needs go and see it.*" He pleads the necessity of his case. He is sorry not to attend, but he has what is more urgent, as he thinks, on hand. He will come another time. The second says, "*I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them.*" This man does not plead the necessity of the case as the other. He goes to prove his yoke of oxen, simply because he *chooses* to do this, rather than go to the feast. The third says, "*I have married a wife, and therefore I can not come.*" This is a rude, point-blank refusal. The cares and the pleasures of life so fill the man's soul, that he has no room even to think of another time when he may possibly attend, or feel an inclination to go. He dismisses all thought of it at once.

With such variety of feeling existing in individuals to whom John's message came, our Lord as we have seen, groups them all together in one class under this general character, common to all, "*They all with one consent began to make excuse.*" We must not suppose that our Lord meant *absolutely* that *all* the leading men among the Pharisees did so. There may have been some exceptions, such as Nicodemus, for example. But these were so rare, that he was justified in marking the whole class as he does here. In alluding to them on the occasion of his putting forth the parable of the two sons, as those who "went *not*,"—he says, "John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and YE *believed him* NOT: but the publicans and the harlots believed him, and YE, when ye had seen it, *repented not* afterward that *ye might believe him.* And these men themselves gloried in this their rejection of the Gospel message. "Are ye also deceived?" they said once in their council, to their own officers sent by them to apprehend Jesus. "Have ANY of the *rulers* or of the *Pharisees* believed on him? But this people who knoweth not the law are cursed."—(John vii. 48, 49.)

Such is the first class in the parable to which the invitation is given, and who so unanimously reject it. There is a single word at this part of the parable which demands attention: "*The master of the house* BEING ANGRY." Through the whole of Christ's ministry of love and reconciliation, it is alone when dealing with "the scribes and Pharisees," that we behold the flashing forth of his

righteous indignation. At one time he looks round upon them with anger. At another he denounces them for their hypocrisy. And, again, he marks them with special condemnation, because they neither would "enter into the kingdom of heaven themselves, nor suffer those who were entering, to go in."

If this be the true application of the first part of the parable, we can well see how it must have cut into the heart of many of those "chief Pharisees" with whom he was then sitting at meat. One of them had spoken of the eating bread in the kingdom of God, as if it were already his. "Take heed," says our Lord in effect to him, "that you, too, are not found among those high-minded, worldly, carnal men, who with one consent are rejecting me, and so returning careless or insolent refusals, as the case may be, to the only Being who has the power to admit to that *great supper*."

The second sending forth of the servant, refers to the commission given to the Apostles of Christ to preach the glad tidings of his Gospel, and invite sinners to his feast. By the terms of this commission, they were to "*begin* at Jerusalem." And so here it is, "*the streets and lanes of the city*" to which the servant is sent. "To the *poor* the Gospel is now preached,"—both those who were of low degree, and those who were *poor* in spirit, but still expressly among the Jews. Among the great masses of the people, while the proud Pharisees despised and rejected Christ, were to be found those who as "poor, and maimed, and halt, and blind," (mark here the connection between verses thirteen and twenty-one,) were bidden, as on the day of Pentecost, and who "gladly *received* the word," and who pressed eagerly in, to "eat bread in the kingdom of God." And even when those proud Pharisees began to do to the servants as they had done to the Master, and persecute them even to the death, yet was the "number of the disciples multiplied," and "*the streets and the lanes*" of Jerusalem witnessed to the faith and patience of many who "rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Christ," and who would not be hindered from going to share in the rich bounties of their Master's feast of love.

But "*yet there is room*," is the intimation given by the servant to the master of the feast. That feast must have its full complement of guests. It has been prepared at a most costly price, and there must not be one vacant place at the table. Here we have

the glory of the Gospel of Christ specially set forth. Though first delivered to the *Jew*, it is not *limited* to the Jew. This limitation in the former dispensation was needful for the day of preparation. But when once *ready*, nothing will satisfy the master of the house, but to embrace *all* the families of the earth in his universal invitation, "*Come, for all things are now ready.*" And so, here, the servant is desired to go "OUT *into the highways and hedges;*"—no longer to the city, but to the country, to the *pagans,* the heathen, the Gentiles, and bear to them the glad tidings of the Gospel of peace. The Apostles "beginning at Jerusalem," were not to be satisfied without preaching the Gospel to *every creature.*" And this was to be their special attitude, they were "*to compel them to come in.*" They were to use all earnestness and persuasion, as those who must give account, that many might be gathered from the north, and south, and east, and west, and so their "*master's house be filled.*" How remarkably does the ministry of Paul answer to this description! "Knowing, therefore, the terrors of the Lord," he says, "we *persuade* men." "As though God did *beseech* you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled unto God."

The parable closes with the indignant declaration of the master of the feast, to which reference has been made already. "*For I say unto you, That none of those men that were bidden shall taste of my supper.*" When we reflect on what that feast is, and *who* gives it, this exclusion is, indeed, an awful one. The feast is salvation with its untold blessings; the master of the feast is the Author and the Finisher of salvation; and to have no part or lot with these, is to have a part in the lake which burneth with fire forever. Terribly does our Lord describe the final condition of those who had trifled away their day of grace, who had refused his repeated invitations—"There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves *thrust out.* And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God." They who with "one consent began to make excuse," while the door into the master's house was open, will find, when too late, and when the door is shut, what they have lost; and their cry, "Lord, open unto us," will be replied to, by the righteous condemnation, "I know you not"—"depart from me."

CHAPTER II.

THE WICKED HUSBANDMEN—THE MARRIAGE OF THE KING'S SON.

THE next parable in this section was delivered at a later period of our Lord's ministry than that we have considered in the last chapter; and this will account for the increasingly stern character of the announcement now made.

"*Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a wine-press in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country: and when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruit of it. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise. But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him. When the Lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.*"—Matt. xxi. 33–41; Mark xii. 1–12; Luke xx. 9–18.

In the immediately preceding part of this chapter, our Lord had given a well-merited rebuke to the "chief priests and elders of the people," in the parable of the *two sons*, and he takes the opportunity of still further setting forth their evil conduct in the parable before us. "Hear *another* parable," he says to them. The Evangelist Luke tells us, that he spoke this parable to the people; but he also notes the presence within hearing of those Scribes

and Pharisees. And we thus gain from the separate accounts, what it was that our Lord specially desired to represent in the parable. The whole Jewish people must be regarded as the *husbandmen*. "Therefore I say unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." But as it is the chief priests and Pharisees who were leading on the people to the filling up of their iniquity—as they were the chief instigators in all those things which were bringing wrath upon the nation unto the uttermost, it is not to be wondered at, if they are made in the parable the special representatives of the people, in connection with the desolation which was coming on the latter under their guidance. And no wonder that it is added, "When the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parable, they perceived that he spake of them."

What is the "vineyard" in the parable? It can not mean here, as in others, "the house of Israel, and the men of Judah," for these latter are the husbandmen to whom it is first let, and who are then driven out to make room for others who shall "bring forth the fruits thereof." The vineyard must be something which was first put into the hands of the Jews to *keep*, and then taken from them because of their wickedness. This can be nothing else than the revealed truth of God—a revelation embracing all that he was pleased to make known of himself—of the condition of man—of his plans toward the latter—of his warnings and his promises. This revelation, first spoken and then written—the "lively oracles" of God, was first committed solemnly to the charge of the Jewish people. The covenant in the wilderness formally and distinctly settled them as keepers of this vineyard, with all things pertaining to it. This covenant installed them as the responsible parties for all that the Householder had reason to expect from his vineyard —in other words, for all the blessed results which such a trust as they had from the God of truth, love, light, and holiness, was, if duly improved, capable of providing. It was in the wilderness that the vineyard was expressly "*let out*," under the terms of a binding covenant, to the first husbandmen.

The "*hedging round about*," the "*wine-press dug*," the "*tower built*," must not be pressed too minutely in the interpretation. It is enough that we see generally in these, that the householder could not have done more than he did in his vineyard. Its de-

fenses were such that proper care on the part of the husbandmen would have sufficed for its protection. Its means were all prepared and at hand to extract the precious sweetness of divine truth. And it had its tower of prayerful watchfulness, where the interests of the Lord of the vineyard might be vigilantly guarded.

The messages that are spoken of in the first part of this parable, as sent by the householder to the husbandmen, for the fruit of the vineyard, refer to the constant appeals made to Israel by God's servants the prophets. Jehovah is represented as so anxiously engaged in this effort to obtain fruit from his vineyard, as "to be rising up early and sending" these servants. The reception which they met with, is just as described in the parable. They were despised—they were shamefully entreated—they were often put to death. The history of the prophets of Israel is as remarkable in the testimony it bears to the long-suffering and patience of Jehovah in continuing to send one servant after another, "at sundry times and in divers manners," as for the terrible proof it gives of the stubbornness, rebellion, and ungodliness of the husbandmen who so wickedly betrayed their trust.

The turning point in the parable is where the householder is said to send his son as the very last effort he could possibly make in order to bring the husbandmen to a proper sense of their duty. This necessarily refers to the coming of the Son of God in the flesh. Up to this time, the prophets and servants of God, under the Old Testament, had come to the husbandmen, and in vain. The Son of God himself closes that long period of waiting and long-suffering by his own advent, in the "form of a servant," to make one last appeal to the husbandmen.

The parable as given by Luke is most striking and affecting just at this point. "Then said the Lord of the vineyard, What shall I do? I will send my beloved son: it may be they will reverence him when they see him." These words carry their own interpretation with them. Jehovah has but one gift better than all the others left—he has given prophets and holy men, Samuel, Elijah, Isaiah, and Jeremiah, but to no purpose. "What will he do?" He has "his beloved son in whom he is well-pleased," the "only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Will he part with him? Will he send him to such ungrateful and wicked wretches? Will he put him for a time in their power, within

reach of their malice and wickedness, that they may have this one final opportunity of turning away from their evil and accursed ways? Yes, even this shall not be withheld! "I will send my beloved son: it may be they will reverence him when they see him."

The awful guilt of the people to whom the Son of God thus came, is shadowed forth in the parable, and written as in letters of flame on the pages of the New Testament. The husbandmen conspired together, and in the mad hope of acquiring the vineyard to themselves, they took the son of the householder and cast him out of the vineyard and slew him. "Ye men of Israel," said Peter on the day of Pentecost, "hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: *Him* . . . ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." "Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears," exclaimed Stephen, before the Sanhedrim, "ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain those which showed before of the coming of the just one; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers."

There is a remarkable account given by John, which shows the singular point and force of the parable, where it is said of the husbandmen, that they said one to another, when the Son of the Lord of the vineyard came: "*This is the heir; come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours.*" After the raising of Lazarus, the Evangelist informs us that the "chief priests and Pharisees gathered a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe in him: and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation." The very original of the parabolic picture! "All men will believe on *him*." Then "the Romans will come and take away *our* place and nation." Thus *our* position will be irretrievably ruined, if we suffer *this* man to escape from us any longer. *He* will get the heritage, if we do not take instant measures to prevent it. "It is therefore expedient *for us* that one man die for the people." "*This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours!*"

The parable closes with the miserable punishment inflicted on those wicked men, who were both unfaithful to the trust committed to them, and who perpetrated such atrocities in order to promote their own infamous purposes. They are destroyed, and the vineyard let out to other husbandmen. What kind of destruction is referred to here regarding the Jews will be seen in the next parable. It is enough to observe just now, the fact so distinctly announced by our Lord. The people, urged on by their rulers, were stirred up to cry with blood-thirsty eagerness, "Crucify him, crucify him," and in the overflowing of their malice against "*the heir*," they formally placed themselves under the curse of innocent blood: "His blood be on us, and on our children." And just then, as he was about to give himself into their hands with the full knowledge of what was before him, he solemnly declared their occupation of the vineyard to have ceased:—"Your house is left unto you desolate,"—"The things which belong unto your peace are forever hidden from your eyes." And so, to use the figure of the Apostle of the Gentiles, the Jews were cut off as worthless branches of the olive-tree, in order that the Gentiles might be graffed in.

Our Lord intimates further the awfulness of this destruction which he predicts against the Jews. The "heir" cast out and slain is in a following verse "the stone which the builders rejected." Both mean the Lord Jesus. The rejection of the latter, however, is followed, as he declares, by its being made the "head of the corner," and this change in the similitude is to show, that although they might reject, and cast out, and slay the son, yet *He* himself would finally be victorious over them; and it is this which will cause the destruction to be so terrible. He that takes offense at Christ will be broken—he does it at his own cost, and will suffer accordingly; but he on whom the weight of Christ's special vengeance shall fall, as on those wicked murderers, shall be dashed to pieces—ground to powder. The privilege the latter have despised—the slight they have offered to Christ—their malicious designs against him—their hands stained with the blood of the Prince of Peace—all these shall bring upon them a swifter destruction, a more terrific judgment, than they shall experience whose iniquity has not abounded as theirs did. We go on to another parable which was delivered immediately after that which

we have just considered, and which deals very much with the same subject.

"*The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready; come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandize: and the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all, as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests.*"—Matt. xxii. 2–10.

We shall consider the concluding part of this parable separately.

It is now all but universally admitted that this parable is entirely different from that of the great supper as given by Luke. It is indeed wonderful how they could ever have been confounded together. Except that a feast is spoken of in both, that invitations are issued in both, and that some reject and others accept these, there is nothing in common between the two. The places at which these parables were delivered were different. The great supper was delivered during an entertainment in a Pharisee's house. This parable was delivered in the temple. The times, too, were different—the former was delivered at an earlier period of our Lord's ministry—the latter, as that ministry was drawing to its close. The tone of the two parables coincides with this. In the one the persons simply refuse to attend, and so their punishment is spoken of under the milder term of exclusion. In the latter, refusal is followed by overt acts of violence and murder, and so the punishment is expressed in proportionate sternness. How suitable was this to the times in which the parables were uttered! It was only toward the close of our Lord's ministry that the hard-heartedness which led many of the Jews to reject him from the first, had become so aggravated, that nothing but the blood of Christ

and of his servants would satisfy their malice. Then mark, that just as the wickedness of Christ's enemies is more distinctly set forth as the time passed away, so the deadly character of their sin is more clearly made known. In the parable of the great supper, it is simply a man who makes the supper and bids many. In the parable of the husbandmen, it is the possessor of a vineyard—a person of property and authority. In the parable before us, it is a king making a marriage for his son. The first displays the ingratitude of the recusants—the second, their breach of covenant accompanied by violence—the third, their rebellion, daringly sealed by the blood they shed of the subjects of their king. It was the crime of Barabbas—"*insurrection* and *murder* in the insurrection."

There is likewise this progressive illustration to be noted in these three parables. The first comprehends the period of our Lord's ministry, and marks his righteous indignation because of the hardness of heart with which he was met. The second embraces the same period likewise, with the additional announcement of his own violent death. The third refers to the period subsequent to Christ's ministry altogether, namely, to the preaching of his Gospel to Jew and Gentile from the day of Pentecost, down to the day of the restitution of all things. And mark the nicety with which the figure is chosen in consequence. *Before* Christ died, he offers a feast—he publishes peace—"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." But it is after he died that he specially received the character of the Bridegroom. His death was the price he paid for his bride, the church. It was only by his death that the marriage of the king's son could be contemplated; and so we see how suitable it is to present under the figure of this parable, what not only occurred after Christ's death, but what derives its peculiar signification from the fact of his death.

We have, then, the invitation to the marriage of the king's son, met, in the first instance, by two distinct classes of persons. The first are those who neglected so great salvation. The second are those who, to their neglect of the salvation, added persecution even unto death against those persons who announced it to them. Of the former, we are told that "*they went one to his farm, another to his merchandize*,"—they were men who had property, and were engrossed in what they *had*, and men who were equally engrossed

in *getting* what they had not before; both so pre-occupied by worldly care, that "*they could not come.*" Yea, when again entreated in the most impressive manner, "*all things are ready,*"—the king having prepared the "feast upon the sacrifice" for them, they "*made light of it;*" because, Demas-like, they "loved this present world" rather than Christ. Of the latter, we are told that they "*took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them.*"

How this description in the parable was realized to the very letter, the Acts of the Apostles give large testimony. Throughout that early record of the Church, we read not only of the continued and general resistance of the Jews against the truth, their constant "contradicting and blaspheming,"—but of their determination to extirpate, if possible, by violence, the very name of Christ from the earth. Stephen and James were only the first of a large "army of martyrs," who sealed with their blood the testimony they bore to Christ, being "*entreated spitefully and slain.*"

And here we come in the parable to a more distinct announcement of the particular kind of judgment which was to fall on those despisers of Christ, and persecutors of his saints, than in the more general statement of the preceding parable, "He will miserably destroy these wicked men." In the parable before us, we are told, that "*when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.*" The destruction which fell on the Jews because of their wicked and bloodthirsty opposition to Christ, was just this—they and their city were destroyed together, with an amount of awful calamity, such as never had been known before, and has never been equaled since. The "*armies*" here spoken of, may refer to the *Roman* armies, who took Jerusalem, and like other nations of old (Is. x. 5; xiii. 5; Jer. xxv. 9; Joel ii. 25), were Jehovah's messengers of wrath against that devoted city; or they may refer to the "legions of angels" who are sent forth by him to execute his righteous judgments in the earth, whatever be the lower instrumentality employed, whether famine, pestilence, or sword. It was at the terrible destruction of Jerusalem, then, that this part of the parable was fulfilled, as that event likewise accomplished the words which Jesus spake on another occasion—"Therefore, said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute: that the blood

of all the prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation." Thus were the first husbandmen in the vineyard "miserably destroyed."

Now, although previous to the destruction of Jerusalem the Gospel had been preached to the Gentiles—Cornelius, the centurion, specially called, and Paul chosen as the Apostle of the Gentiles—yet it was not until that destruction that the actual, formal removal of the Jew, and the substitution of the Gentile in his room took place. It was not till that event that the language of the parable was as it were, proclaimed to the world, that although the Jews were bidden to the marriage, they were now considered by the king, who invited them, to be "*not worthy*." They themselves had, according to Paul's own declaration made in their hearing, "judged themselves to be *unworthy* of everlasting life;" that is, they unworthily rejected the offered salvation. And so the destruction of their city with all the horrors which then befell those murderers, were the tokens that Jehovah was dealing with them on that very account.

Again, therefore, in the parable the servants are sent forth—not now to the city, but to the highways—and as many as they could find, they were to "*bid to the marriage*." Obviously this means the calling of the Gentiles—the changing of the outward aspect of the kingdom of God among men, just as it is said immediately before, "therefore I say unto you, the kingdom of God shall be taken from you (the Jews) and given to a nation (the Gentiles), bringing forth the fruits thereof." But observe what the servants did: "*They gathered all, as many as they found, both bad and good*." The "*bad and the good*" here mean those who were regarded as such, when the invitation came to them. And so they direct us to this truth, that the message of mercy in the Gospel—the invitation to the marriage-supper of the Lamb is the same to all *kinds* as well as all conditions of men, those who are outwardly moral and those who are not; and that they who at length answer the invitation and "*come unto the marriage*," are drawn alike from those who, like Nathaniel or Cornelius, may be, in one sense called the "*good*," and from those who, like the woman that was a sinner, may be in the same sense called the "*bad*." And note here, that this single expression in the parable guards us against misconception as to the other just noticed, "they are not *worthy*."

Since the "*bad*" are at length among the "*gathered*," we necessarily conclude that the *unworthiness* spoken of does not refer to *moral* unworthiness, but to the special act of their unbelief and rebellion in voluntarily "putting away from them the word of God."

We turn now to the concluding part of this parable:—"*And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding-garment: and he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding-garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen.*"—Verses 11–14.

The servants of God in this dispensation are engaged in "gathering" together the guests for the marriage of the Lamb. When these shall be finally *gathered*, both those who accept the invitation heartily, and those who only profess to do so, *then* shall the king come *in* to "*see*" them. He will come in to see that there is nothing there that "*offends*," that *none* are there but those who not only come invited, but also who are suitably prepared for his presence. This part of the parable, then, corresponds to the harvest in that of the tares—to the coming of the bridegroom in that of the ten virgins—and the final separation between the righteous and the wicked, when the Son of man shall sit upon the throne of his glory.

"He found there a man," we are told, "which had not on *a wedding-garment*." It is still a matter of dispute whether the custom was ever a general one, to provide a garment for every guest invited to a marriage-feast. Some affirm it was; others question it. It is of secondary importance how this may be settled. It is quite enough for us to observe, that obviously in the story of the parable before us, it is taken for granted, and would be so understood by those who heard it, that some such provision had been made for the guests, which made the conduct of the man who had not on the wedding-garment altogether inexcusable. The very manner in which the king addressed him implies this: "*How camest thou in hither, not having on a wedding-garment?*" Every thing has been provided for you, why have you not taken advantage of it? The man's silence, too, equally proves that the

story was based upon what the hearers would perfectly understand, that it was owing to his own culpable carelessness, as well as to his contemptuous disregard of what was due to the king, that he appeared thus without a *wedding-garment.*

But what, then, does the *wedding-garment* mean? Some say *faith,* others *love.* But why disconnect the two, instead of just speaking of them as one, "faith working by love." If the wedding-garment be faith, then it is such a faith as shows itself by love. If it be love, then it is such a love as springs only from faith. Better though to say, that it is what comprises both faith and love—which implies them both—which demands them both, but which is higher than both—the righteousness of Christ "unto all, and upon all them that believe," and "who walk in love." This is what has been provided for the poor sinner, "without money and without price." This is what "covers his sin," and "clothes him with salvation." This is the "*new garment*" which Christ has himself prepared for him, "woven from the top throughout." This is the "best robe" which the Father puts upon his penitent child, as he seals his justification by the kiss of peace. This is the wedding-garment which "white in the blood of the Lamb," *alone* qualifies for a place at his marriage-supper. It is his purchase, and the price was his blood. Clothed with it, the poor sinner is "justified freely from all things through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." And it is as necessary at the last as at the first. It has been his admission into the family of God. It alone must be his raiment of glory in the "inheritance of the saints in light."

But why in this parable is there but *one* man singled out, as not having a wedding-garment? Evidently to point attention to the minute personal examination that awaits all who have received the Gospel invitation. It intimates to us how searching will be the judgment of that day, when Christ shall separate "*one* from *another,*" even as a shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats. And it points to the heart of each individual who reads the parable, as if with the solemn warning, to take heed, lest *he* should at length be as the man without the wedding-garment. Amid the thousands that will at length be found in this case, let *each* man reflect that *he* will be individually detected, exposed, and cast out, as if *he,* and he *alone,* were the exception in that mighty gathering

of those who shall sit down at length clothed with the wedding-garment.

Mark the *tone* of address to this man, "*Friend*, how camest thou in?" For what purpose is this? It is to mark, that the judgment which at the last day shall bring home to the heart of the unrighteous man his sin, and condemn him, shall not be the stern, terrible blaze of revealed majesty, as it were bearing him down to destruction, but it shall be the still small voice of awakened conscience. The sinner who is destitute of Christ's righteousness at last, will not be rendered "*speechless*" by the unspeakable terror of manifested power and glory, but by the unutterable inward horror that he has sinned away his own mercies. It is not the pressure of irresistible power which will consume him with misery, but the fearful dawning of such light within him, revealing truth despised and love slighted, which will make him speechless in his wretchedness. Oh, the silence of self-conviction at the last day, under the eye and within the hearing of Jesus! "*Friend*, how camest thou in hither, not having on a wedding-garment?" is far more awful to think of, and will be infinitely more dreadful to realize, than all the thunders, and the lightnings, and the loud trumpet voices of Sinai. Yes, then there shall be acted out on the mightiest scale, and before an assembled universe, what appeared in type when Jesus once stood in the temple. They who hear his voice at last in such an address as that in the parable, "convicted by their own consciences, shall go out, *one* by *one*, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last."

Ah, reader, what will matter all the "*binding hand and foot*" by the king's servants, to one bound *thus* by the adamant of an awakened conscience? What will matter the "outer darkness" in comparison of that "blackness of darkness" which will brood forever on the soul, as it feels, "I might have been, but *am not* saved?"

It is impossible not to observe the gracious purpose of Christ in drawing this parable to such a close. He had shown in it the destruction of the Jew, and the choosing of the Gentile in his room. Let the latter, then, take heed. "If God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee." "Be not high-minded, but fear." If ye are found without "*the wedding-garment*" at last, after such amazing love and goodness to you, it

may be, that you will envy the fate of those whose city was destroyed. And let all who now among the nations are privileged to have the invitation to the marriage of the King's son brought to them, solemnly remember, that while the singling out of only *one* without the wedding-garment is meant to make *each man* look well to himself and his own hope, on the other hand, our Lord gives the sad intimation, that "many are called, but few chosen," to show that in the Gentile day of grace as well as the Jewish, it is after all but a small remnant who really accept of God's invitation of mercy at all.

PART VI.

CHRIST'S WORK OF GRACE, IN ITS HISTORICAL AND PROPHETICAL CHARACTER.

SECT. III.—THE RETURN OF THE SON OF MAN.

We have now reached the closing and not the least solemn section of the parables of our Lord. The last section set forth before us the close of the Jewish dispensation. This carries us forward to the close of the Gentile age. Repeatedly in Scripture we are assured that the close of this age will be signalized by the "glorious appearing" of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is to this great and stupendous event, then, that the parables still to be considered specially refer. The event itself is spoken of as "the coming of the Son of man." (Matt. xxiv.; Luke xii.) And also as "the return" of the Son of man. (Luke xii., xix.) The time when this event shall take place is called "The day of the Lord" (Luke xvii.), or "the hour" in which "the Lord" or "the Son of man" shall come. (Matt. xxiv.) In turning our attention to what is given to us in the parables regarding this coming or return of Christ, we shall first glance at two or three very brief but emphatic parables, which severally present in detail the most prominent circumstances connected with it, and the most striking features of it. Here is the first of them.

"*And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. . . . Likewise also, as it was in the days of Lot. . . . Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.*"—Luke xvii. 26, 28, 30.

These two most terrible and awful occurences in the history of the world are turned by our Lord into exact similitudes of what is yet to come; "*As* it was," &c. "*Even* thus shall it be," &c.; and they present before us therefore a very solemn picture of what

the state of the *world* will be when the Son of man returns. It will be such as to combine in its great characteristics all that can be said of the world before the flood, and of the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah before their destruction. Then these parables show that after a period of long-suffering, and when iniquity shall at length abound, judgment shall surely and suddenly come upon the world. And the horrors of *that* day may be like the combined horrors of a flood of water and a flood of fire. And thus, too, we are taught to look forward not to a world gradually becoming better, and holier, and happier, but to a world becoming every day more hostile to God, more ripe for judgment, and at length shaken out of its carnality and spiritual slumber by overwhelming desolation. Look now at the reverse side of this picture.

"*A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world.*"—John xvi. 21.

From our Lord's remarks in the context we assuredly gather that these words give us the state of the *true* Church of Christ at his return. "*Ye*," says our Lord (Judas had gone out; he spake then to those left, as representing his own chosen and faithful ones), "*ye* shall weep and lament." The absence of your Master will cause sorrow and sadness to you; and this will become deeper and darker as the time goes on, just as with the woman "*whose hour is come.*" All this time, however, "the world shall rejoice"—they will go on as in the days of Noah and Lot. But "ye shall be sorrowful." Like your Master, whose last hours were marked by his being "exceeding sorrowful even unto death," so shall it be with you. But "your sorrow shall be turned into joy." Like the woman who "*remembers no more her anguish*," the very matter of your grief will be the matter of your joy. "I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." Thus we see that although the moment of judgment for the world will be the hour of extreme trial for the people of God, it will, at the same time, be the hour of their deliverance, when they and the world shall severally exchange, the one their sorrow for joy, the other their joy for sorrow. It will at the same time be the day when they shall "*see*" Christ

again, and he will take care that their joy shall never be taken from them.

Observe, further, the indications of the approach of this day of the Lord.

"Now learn a parable of the fig-tree: *When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: so likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it* (*He*, margin—"The kingdom of God," Luke xxi.) *is near, even at the doors.*"—Matt. xxiv. 32, 33.

It would be impossible, and out of place here, to enter into any detail regarding "*these things*" here spoken of. Suffice it to say, that if the people of God are really "looking up"—simply, humbly, patiently seeking "to discern this time," they shall be guided to "understand" *these* also, as clearly as they know by the putting forth of the leaves of the fig-tree that summer is nigh at hand. Their Master, who has told them that he will "come as a thief in the night," that is, all unexpectedly to the people of the world, warns them not to let that event come upon them unawares, and we may rest assured therefore that he will not leave them in darkness as the day approaches.

But, again, note the *suddenness* with which the Son of man shall be revealed.

"*As the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.*"—Matt. xxiv. 27; Luke xvii. 24.

Though by the children of God the gathering thunder-cloud shall be long descried, and they shall distinctly note the tokens of coming vengeance on the wicked, as well as "redemption drawing nigh" to themselves, yet at length, just at the moment known only to God, like the lightning-flash from the bosom of the storm, the Son of man shall be revealed in his day. And not only so, but there will be no mistake about it *then*. People will not be saying, "Lo here, or, lo there." All these false cries and vain speculations can only exist when as yet he has *not* appeared. But when he does, "every eye shall see him." The "brightness of his coming" shall be "out of the one part under heaven, even unto the other part under heaven."

And if we put the question as the disciples did, "Where, Lord?" then the following will supply the answer:—

"*Wheresoever the body is, there shall the eagles be gathered together.*" —Matt. xxiv. 28; Luke xvii. 37.

The day of the Lord will be that in which he will "make inquisition for blood," in which he will "come out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity." Wherever, therefore, there is a faithless servant, a disobedient child, a rebellious subject, there, as upon a dead carcass, shall fall the judgment of that day. Wherever there is to be the sifting out of the wicked from among the just, the gathering of the tares from the wheat, the good from the bad in the net—the one "taken and the other left"—wherever this is to be done, will the Son of man be in his day, "destroying them which destroy," or "corrupt" (margin), as with the presence of a putrefying dead body, "the earth."

So far then, generally, as regards, the return of the Son of man. We now proceed to inquire into what our Lord has charged particularly on the heart and conscience of his people in the prospect of that coming. And the parables in which this will be found, are directed specially to the condition of the outward Church of Christ in view of his appearing. Here is the first of them.

"*Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that, when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately.*"—Luke, xii. 35, 36; Mark, xiii. 34.

In this passage we have the case of certain servants to whom is intrusted the care of their Master's house during his absence from it. He has gone forth, and is expected to return from his marriage, bringing his bride with him. The servants, then, are to "WAIT *for their Lord.*" They are to be in their right place, not taking advantage of his absence to be out of the way, but remaining at home, ready, as soon as the Master "cometh *and knocketh*," to "*open unto him immediately.*" Mark speaks of the servant as "the porter." And this just marks the special duty here required, namely, quiet, steady "waiting" at his post for the return of his Master—ready just at the moment when he hears him, to open the door.

And here then we have set forth what believers ought to be in their present condition—their Lord being absent from them,

and faithlessness abounding in his professing Church. They ought to be "*waiting*" for Christ. As the Apostle has it, "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the *patient waiting* for Christ." This means steady, calm endurance even to the end, not moved by "evil tidings," or "casting away confidence," but kept in perfect peace, having "the mind stayed on God." It means that the believer should "hold fast that which he has," and be ready at any moment when his Lord returns, to say, "Lo, this is the Lord; I have *waited* for him."

But there is something more demanded of the believer than merely *waiting*. The servant may be in his right place, in expectation of his Master's return, but he may be drowsy, and lacking in that wakeful diligence which shall prevent him from being taken even for a moment unawares by his Master knocking at the door. We have therefore a very striking parable given us, in order to enforce something *more* than waiting.

"*Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you; but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily, I say unto you, I know you not.*" Matthew xxv. 1–12.

"*Then* shall the kingdom of heaven be likened"—at the time spoken of in the preceding chapter, namely, the "coming of the Son of man." As the night closes in upon this dispensation, then shall those things represented in the parable take place. The following is an interesting and just description of the custom on which the parable is founded. "The bridegroom, accompanied by his friends 'the children of the bride-chamber,' goes to the

house of the bride, and conducts her with pomp and gladness to his own house. She is accompanied from her father's house by her youthful friends and companions, while other of them, the 'virgins' of the parable, at some convenient place, meet and join the procession, and enter with the rest of the bridal company into the hall of feasting." The number *ten* is given, simply because that number was regarded as a company. The virgins have lamps, because the marriages in the East are always performed at night, and so both to give needful light, and to add brilliancy to the marriage progress, those who wish to do honor to the bridegroom, or hope to share in the festivities of his house, always "go forth to meet" him thus. The close of the parable is also based simply on the custom, that it is only those who are ready to go in with the bridegroom who are admitted. And that when once he and his party have gone in, no intreaty can induce them to open the door to any one else.

Now this parable is not directed against the openly irreligious and the ungodly. These are not taken account of at all in it. It is a solemn warning to those who make a profession of godliness, as well as to those who are what they profess to be. "*The kingdom of heaven* shall be likened," &c. The kingdom as it appears outwardly before men in this dispensation. The mingled wheat and tares in the field, and the good and bad in the net. The visible Church on earth will "*then* be likened," &c.

Of the one company of ten virgins, we are told "*five were wise and five were foolish.*" Apart from other considerations, this description is decisive as regards the main character of the sections of the visible Church represented by these two groups. The one are "*wise* unto salvation"—the other have their "*foolish hearts* darkened," whatever profession they may make. The parable of the two builders confirms this view. The one was *wise*, the other *foolish*. Both builded their houses, that is, both made a formal profession of discipleship. But the one had a foundation, the other had not; that is, the disciple represented by the *wise* builder has Christ—he who is represented by the foolish builder has *not* Christ. And so here. The "*wise virgins*" mean those who "hear Christ's sayings and do them." The "foolish virgins" "hear and do not."

But the wisdom of the one, and the folly of the other, are alike

exhibited in the parable. "*The foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.*" The first were satisfied with a certain show, the others took care not to be "found wanting." These lamps which all the virgins carried, mean that which in the outward church appears before man. As far as this goes, it is not always possible to distinguish between the two sections pointed out. The distinction will at length be manifest, but in reality it exists from the first. The foolish virgins had *only* their lamps. The wise, besides their lamps, had a store of oil in vessels which they carried.

There can be no doubt as to the signification of this part of the parable. What is it that makes the believer "shine as a light in the world?" It is alone the Spirit of God, so frequently spoken of in Scripture under the figure of "*oil.*"—(2 Cor. i. 21; 1 John ii. 20, 27, &c.) Nothing but the continued supply of the Spirit of all grace can suffice to keep his light from being extinguished. This supply the believer carries always about with him for use; and the vessel which contains it for him is "the Word of God and prayer"—not the one without the other, but both together—the latter being the lid, as it were, of the vessel, which must be lifted up, in order to get at the supply within the former. Here the believer has an unfailing supply. This will suffice to trim his lamp through all the days of his pilgrimage, and at the darkest midnight at his Lord's coming, will so fill him with all grace, that he shall be as a "shining light, shining more and more unto the perfect day."

The "*foolish virgins*" who "*took no oil*" with them, are precisely similar to those who are represented in the parable of the sower as receiving the seed on "rocky ground." They at first "receive the word with joy." A marked and apparently very decided profession is speedily made. They are eager to "*go forth*," but they have "no root in themselves"—no "*oil with them*"—no grace in their heart. They "lack moisture"—they have no supply for their lamps—they have not the Spirit, and so in "time of temptation they fall away"—their "*lamps go out,*" and leave them in darkness.

This parable, then, would in one respect seem to warn us, that in the last days of this dispensation, previous to the coming of the Son of man, this special feature of nominal Christianity shall

abound—a hasty and very zealous profession—"a spinging up" of this *forthwith*—a *going forth* with it with much seeming joy—a bright flashing of lamps, and then, at the moment when there ought to be the strongest evidence of true discipleship, "a falling away" and "a going out."

"*While the bridegroom tarried*," we are told, "*they all slumbered and slept*." The *tarrying* of the bridegroom marks well the period referred to in the parable. It is not when he set forth to bring the bride—nor when he had been gone for some time—but when he was expected back, and when to those who "went forth," he appeared to be "delaying his coming." The direct consequence of this apparent delay, or tarrying (for, be it remembered, there was no *real* tarrying on his part), was that "*they* ALL *slumbered and slept*"—first became drowsy, and then slept. It seems to be impossible to gather any thing else from this very positive statement, than that the whole professing church of Christ will be found at last in the state here set forth. The kingdom of heaven will *then* be found like the ten virgins who "*all* slumbered and slept." Of course, the sleep here spoken of is a widely different thing in the several cases of the wise and the foolish. The foolish are sleeping in their carnal security, quite satisfied with the profession they make—deceiving themselves, and "at ease in Zion." The wise are sleeping, overcome by their lengthened watching, and because of the weakness of their faith. They are sleeping, as the Apostles did in the garden, "for sorrow," weighed down by the days of darkness and of gloom which have settled on the church. They are sleeping, because their faith has not arisen proportionately to their Lord's demand, that "they should pray always and not faint"—because when he returns he will not find that it has a strength at all commensurate with his promises, or that its living energy has gone on increasing during the period when he "bears long with them," and appears to delay his coming.

The consequence of this slumbering and sleeping would be at once apparent in the company of the ten virgins. During that time none of them would be trimming their lamps at all. The foolish would not have their attention directed to the ominous fading of the light in their lamps. The wise would not see that their lamps were not burning so brightly as they might and ought

to have done. Thus it will be before the Bridegroom cometh. The spiritual slumber of the merely nominal believer will close his eyes to the imminence of his danger. He will become more insensible to the worthlessness of a mere profession. And, on the other hand, the languid faith of the true believer—his faint-heartedness and his feeble hope—will prevent him from taking care that his light shall not even flicker—will prevent him from such a steady, unflinching, and watchful perseverance through the whole dark night of his waiting for his Master, as truly is becoming on his part, and as his Master well deserves at his hands.

Suddenly, then, "*at midnight*" the Bridegroom came, and the cry sounded in the ears of the waiting virgins, "*Go ye out to meet him.*" And now the distinction between the two groups becomes palpable. The wise had their oil with them in their vessels, and though not so prepared as they ought to have been, they had their full supply to replenish their lamps, and they accordingly arose, trimmed them, and were ready. It is evident that in the parable there is a short period marked between the cry, "*Go ye out to meet him,*" and the account, "while the foolish virgins went to buy, *the Bridegroom came.*" And it may be, then, that just as the time of the "promise draws nigh," there may be such a startling cry—such "signs in the sun and in the moon and in the stars," as shall effectually rouse the people of God, and by the full outpouring of the Spirit in these last days, make them to shine gloriously just as the Bridegroom actually returns, so that they shall be indeed "*ready to go in with him to the marriage.*"

But what of the "foolish virgins?" They, too, tried to trim their lamps, but in vain, for the oil was spent, and they had no supply. "*Our lamps,*" they cry, "*are going out*" (margin). They begin to see the reason; they lack oil. They apply to the wise, "*Give us of your oil,*" but they can not get what they want there. So as they rush to them who sell, in order to get it, the Bridegroom comes—those that were ready go in with him, and they are shut out. This presents before us very forcibly the fact, that the very period at the close of this dispensation, when the people of God shall "begin to lift up their heads," because of their "redemption drawing nigh," will be marked by the discovery of the impossibility of mere profession "abiding the day of Christ's appearing." While the "wise shall understand," and shall "stand

in their lot at the end of days," the foolish shall awake to a consciousness of their lamentable folly in trusting to a lamp without oil. Their "hearts shall fail for fear, and for looking after the things which are coming on the earth." The warning of the Son of man's approach, which will at length cause the true disciple to cry rejoicingly, "This is the Lord, we have waited for him," will make the nominal disciple ready only to cry to "the rocks to fall on him, and the hills to cover him from the wrath of the Lamb."

The details of the parable at this point are most instructive as well as touching. "*Give us of your oil*," the foolish virgins cried to the wise. "*Not so*," the latter replied, "*lest there be not enough for us and you.*" How striking this refusal! It just means that no man has more grace than he needs himself—that while there is an unfailing fountain from whence alone every one can obtain what he requires, each as he receives has nothing to spare for another. He may direct to the same source which has supplied himself, but he can not afford to part with any of his own. He will need all that he has for his own use. He has nothing approaching to *supererogation*, he has not "*enough*" for himself and another. The wise virgins counseled the foolish to go to those who sold oil, and buy for themselves. This was all they could do in the emergency. The latter went. In the mean time, however, the Bridegroom came. He went in. The door was shut. And when they came and cried, "Lord, open to us," all admittance was refused. The Bridegroom declared "*I know you not*," and so they were left out. In this we see remakably set before us the true bearing of God's people toward those who will apply to them for help, as the last moment approaches, and the Bridegroom is close at hand. They can give no help themselves. But they earnestly urge them to go and seek for what they need where alone it can be found. They urge them to go and get it at any cost—to sell all and obtain it. But alas, the parable seems to intimate that *then* it will be too late! The careless and heartless disciple may be roused to anxiety and dread, and he may confusedly run hither and thither for help, but in the mean time the Lord comes, they that are ready go in, and he is shut out. And when it is said to him as he knocks for entrance, and knocks in vain, "*I never knew you*," this just shows that he never *knew*

Christ, that there had never been any thing save a barren lifeless calling him, "Lord, Lord," and that now, though "he seeks to enter in, he shall not be able."

And thus we come to the great and solemn lesson inculcated by our Lord in this parable. "Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of man cometh." Observe this is urging more than merely *waiting*. The disciple may be *waiting*, that is, like the "porter" at the door, he may be in his right place; but he may be asleep at his post. He may not have gone out of the way, and be idling his time in pursuits and in places dishonoring to his Master, and showing unconcern for his name; but he may, while in the way, be "*slumbering*" and "*sleeping*;" and so the earnest appeal to him is not only to *wait*, but to *watch* for the coming of his Lord—not only to be *at* the door, ready to open when his Master knocks, but wakefully to be looking out from his watch-tower of prayer, and, as it were, speeding on the return of his Lord, by the watchful cry, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly."

And surely the parable further urges on true believers the guilt of slumbering and sleeping at all in reference to those who make the same profession with themselves. If the wise virgins had been as watchful as they ought to have been, they might have more opportunely and more earnestly urged the foolish virgins to look well to their lamps, and to lose no time in getting a supply. And let every child of God, then, "according as he sees the day approaching," "watch unto prayer" himself. "Watch and pray that he enter not into temptation;" and then give all diligence to rouse the carnally-minded and the self-deceivers around him from their vain hopes and refuges of lies ere it be too late, and the awakening from their slumber shall only reveal to them at one and the same time the emptiness of their profession, and the door forever shut against them.

But our Lord, when drawing the attention of his disciples to his return at the close of this dispensation, gives them further instructions as to what he then will look for and require at the hands of his faithful people, and also gives further warning to those who have only "a name to live."

"*For the kingdom of heaven is as a man traveling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his*

goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey. Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money. After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained besides them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents besides them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: and I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not, shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."—Matthew xxv. 14–30.

One special purpose in this parable is to teach us that in looking for the return of our Master we must be found actively engaged in the performance of all those duties which he requires us to fulfill. We must not only *wait*, we must also *watch* for his appearing. And lest the last parable should give to this watching too much of a merely contemplative character, lest the notion might possibly be entertained that the proper watching for the

Lord means an *idle* looking out for him, lest it might be supposed that the attitude of expectation ought to be merely that of the wise virgins, only awake and not asleep—our Lord teaches us in this parable that we must not only be faithfully *waiting*, and wakefully *watching*, but diligently *working*—that he is not the servant who does his Master's will, who, though in his place, and expecting him, gazes forth into the darkness, and consumes his time in idle speculations as to the exact manner or time of his Lord's return, or in dreamy contemplation of the coming event, but who is engaged in his household work, who is in his right place, wakeful and vigilant, and is "*doing* with his might whatsoever his hands find to do." That man will not think the less deeply, or expect the less anxiously, or look the less clearly for his Master who works the most diligently "while it is called day."

Besides, we ought to observe that, as in the parable of the ten virgins, it is the inner life of the believer that is specially set forth there, by their carrying oil with them in their lamps; so here it is the outward manifestation of that inward life which is set forth, not now in the steady burning of a true profession, but in the faithful discharge of duty to our Master.

Of course we must not form our impressions of this parable from households as existing among ourselves. There is nothing in the latter at all resembling the groundwork of the parable. But "slaves in antiquity were often artisans, or were allowed otherwise to engage freely in business, paying, as it was frequently arranged, a fixed yearly sum to their master; or, as here, they had money committed to them wherewith to trade on his account, or with which to enlarge their business, and to bring him in a share of their profits." Something of this latter sort is assumed in the parable.

Observe, then, as the master in the parable means to leave his house for some time, he does two things with his servants who are to remain behind. First, he "*delivers unto them his goods*." He gives in charge to them the valuable things in his house. Here generally we have set forth the Gospel with all its treasures, its unsearchable riches, its blessings for time and eternity committed into the hands of Christ's servants. The Church of God on earth has this sacred deposit given her by her Divine Head. She is to guard it with the utmost jealousy and watchfulness; and she will

have to give account at last for her faithfulness or otherwise in this trust.

But besides this, the master of the house in the parable gives certain talents to his servants, and to these in different proportions, to be used by them in the interval of his absence, and turned to the very best account in his service. He gives to one five, to another two, and to another one. What do these talents mean? They can not mean mental endowments, intellectual capacities, and so forth, because it is said that the talents were given to each "*according to his several* ABILITY" or *power*. Each servant got something proportioned to the endowments and capacities which he had already. Neither can the talents mean spiritual graces, for it can never be said of them that they are given according to the *ability* of the servant. Spiritual graces enlarge capacity and increase ability, but they are never bestowed according to these. What then, is it that is meant by this distributing of talents? It is by remembering that these servants had a general trust given them of their master's goods put into their hands, besides the talents, that we shall gain the just view of the latter. Thus the servants of Christ, his people, the members of his visible Church on earth, have a solemn trust committed to them, even the precious things of his Gospel. Each one of them also has ability, fitting him if he please to serve his Master. The ability may be great or small, he may be endowed largely or moderately with it, and according to this will much or little be expected from him. He will be reckoned with according to that which he hath, not according to that which he hath not. But besides this general trust of his Master's good things, and the ability bestowed on him to serve Christ if he will, his Master expressly gives him opportunities to exercise that ability in his service. Not, indeed, such as he has not ability to take advantage of, but such as are exactly suited to that ability, and which if used and improved will redound to the glory of the Master and the good of the servant. These are the talents in the parable. To one whose *ability* is proportionably large, he gives, suitably to this, large opportunities of faithful, diligent, active service, expressed by the five talents. To another, whose *ability* is not so great, he gives only as much as may be represented by two talents; while to a third, whose ability is still less, he gives only one. Observe

these opportunities, by the due improvement of which we may faithfully serve our heavenly Master, are set forth by the various numbers of five, two, and one, just to show that each one who is professedly a member of Christ's Church, has throughout his whole earthly course a certain amount of opportunity afforded him in the use of which he may do the will of God; and whether that amount be *as* five, or two, or one, yet that it is just in accordance with his *ability* to use it. And if enlarged *ability* receives as *five*, instead of *one*, let it be remembered that the responsibility is proportionally increased, for "to whom much is given, of him will much be required." Guilty as the man is in the parable who left unimproved his own talent, the guilt of the other would have been much greater if he had left unimproved his five talents. And so here we observe the loving wisdom of the great Head of the Church. He gives opportunity to serve suited to each one, but he does not impose upon any a responsibility unsuited to his capacity.

Now, the first two servants just doubled their talents. The five became ten, and the two four. They represent those in the church of Christ, therefore, who improve the opportunities given to them whereby they may serve Christ. They turn the opportunity to the account their Master intends and wishes, that is, to *good* account. The talent doubled, is just good fruit springing from active, diligent use of opportunity to serve Christ. The doubling of the talent admirably expresses the due improvement of an opportunity. An opportunity not *duly* improved, is, in other words, *not* improved. And so there is, as it were, a fixed proportion between the opportunity and the improvement of it; and that is aptly represented by each talent being doubled, neither more nor less.

"*After a long time*," we are told, "*the lord of the servants cometh and reckoneth with them.*" The Lord Jesus Christ, after having provided such "good things as pass man's understanding," for his people to keep, "*traveled into a far country*"—returned to his Father—went within the vail—passed through the heavens. As each professing servant after another appears in his outward church, he receives his solemn charge of the goods, and such a number of talents as are according to his ability. When the "*long time*" of the Church's trial, during the absence of her Lord

is past, *then* he will return, and he will take account of all that has passed during his absence, whether it be good or bad.

Those servants who have not been "slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord," he will receive into his special favor. And this favor will be shown to them in two ways. As in the parable, the lord of the servants then says, "*Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things*," so the favor which Christ will show at last to his faithful servants will be first of all this—He will show greater *confidence* in them now than ever. They have had a certain charge committed to them—they have been faithful in *that*—he will now enlarge his trust exceedingly which he will place in their hands, on the principle he himself enunciated, "He that is faithful in that which is least, will be faithful also in much." And then, as the master in the parable says, "*Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord*," so the Lord Jesus shall, as it were, call his people "no longer servants, but friends"—bring them into such close and intimate union with himself as they never had before—cause them to sit down with him at the feast prepared to celebrate his return, and so make them partakers of the joy which will satisfy him, as he sees the fruit of the travail of his soul. Oh, who would not encounter shame for his name!—who would not rejoice in all self-denyings, and cross-bearings!—who would not wait, and watch, and work, and pray, if at last these unutterable blessings crown our time of trust and service on earth—if at last we hear the expression of our Master's approval—"*Well done, good and faithful servant!*"—an enlarged trust be put into our hands by himself—and as we enter *on* that, to enter also forever into *his* joy!

One servant of the three in the parable, was found at the day of reckoning with his talent unused. He had buried it in the earth. When called to account, he endeavored to screen his own wicked conduct, under imputed harshness on the part of his master. "*I was afraid*," he said. His master judged him rightly: "*Thou wicked and slothful servant.*" Wickedness and sloth were the real causes of his evil conduct. Upon his own showing, also, he was condemned. "If I were such a master as you describe, there was the more urgent call for you to work so zealously that I might have received mine own with interest on my return." And the sentence passed upon him was just, "Take away the

talent which has been lent him till now," and "put him away from my household forever."

Observe here, that as in the parable of the ten virgins, the five foolish set forth those who are rejected at last because they think too lightly of the requirements of the Lord, so here, on the other hand, this servant represents those who are rejected because they think too hardly of his commands. Our Lord touches the root from which both these spring, "*wickedness and sloth.*" And notice further, the servant is not condemned because he has turned the talent to *bad* account, but because he had not turned it to any account at all. He has been idle and slothful. And so we have this very solemn truth pressed upon us, that the judge who will reckon with us, will not be satisfied with the plea that we have done no harm (which plea, however, *never* can be substantiated), but he will equally condemn on the ground of our having done no good. To bury amid the cares and pleasures of life, so as to turn to no account, every opportunity of serving Christ which he may put into our hands—thus, "to hide it in the earth," instead of improving it, will call forth this terrible sentence, "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness."

And note further, "*take from him the talent.*" All opportunity of serving Christ is now forever withdrawn. He has slighted that on earth, and he is driven away in his wickedness out of the dwelling of his Master, wherein service is alone possible. There is something very startling in the reflected light which is thrown on this part of the parable by that other, where the "rich man" is in torment. He desires a drop of water *for himself.* He can not have it. Hope as regards himself is extinguished. But if that can not be, he would help his brethren—he would send a message to them, to warn them. *That* can not be either. While he was on earth, he buried his opportunity of serving God in regard to these as well as other things, amid his "purple and fine linen," and "sumptuous fare." And *now* the "talent is taken from him." He wishes to do *now* what he might have done before; but the time is gone by—the die is cast—and "the outer darkness" wraps in its eternal gloom the idle, slothful, wicked servant who hid his Lord's money.

And yet, once more, "*Give the talent unto him that hath ten talents.*" A deep and precious truth lies under this. The man

who had received *five* talents, got that number "*according to his ability.*" By having another talent given him at last, is intimated that his "*ability*" has become greater than it was before. And so it will be, indeed, with the faithful servant who shall enter into his Master's joy in heaven. His ability, his capacity, his power, will be gloriously increased and enlarged; and still "according to that ability" will his divine Master place within his reach increased and enlarged opportunities of serving him. And the servant who sits down at the table with his Master will realize in the activities as well as the rest of heaven, the blessed fullness of his Lord's words, "*unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance.*"

But we go on now to another parable, in some respects similar to that we have just considered, and yet in others perfectly distinct from it.

"*A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us. And it came to pass, that, when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds. And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities. And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds. And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities. And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin: for I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow. And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury? And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds. (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.) For I say unto you, That unto every one which*

hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him. But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me."—Luke xix. 12–27.

It is wonderful how this parable could ever have been supposed to be identical with that of the talents. They were delivered at two distinct periods of our Lord's ministry, and in different places. The parable of the talents was addressed to the disciples *alone*, this to the disciples *and* the multitude. The former has to do merely with the proprietor of a house, the latter with a king. And so in the one, faithful or unfaithful service is all that is taken account of, while in the other rebellion is likewise repressed and punished. In the former there are only three servants spoken of. In the latter there are ten. In the parable of the talents there is an inequality in the number of talents given, while there is an equality in the blessings bestowed on the faithful servants at last. In the parable of the pounds all this is reversed. There is equality in what is first given, and inequality in the blessings finally received. For all these and other reasons we conclude that the two parables are perfectly distinct from each other.

The groundwork of the parable before us must have been well understood by our Lord's hearers. "Thus Herod the Great was at first no more than a subordinate officer in Judea, and flying to Rome before Antigonus, was then declared by the senate, through the influence of Antony, king of the Jews. In like manner, his son Archelaus had personally to wait upon Augustus, before he inherited the dominions left him by his father." And this custom, then, is made in the parable to represent the departure of Christ, after his work on earth was finished, to the throne of God, there to obtain, as it were, the investiture of the kingdom he had purchased, to be "the king set on the holy hill of Zion," and to have "all enemies put under his feet."

Passing by for a moment the allusion to the citizens, let us see what charge is given to the servants here. He gave to each of his ten servants *one* pound, and charged them, "*Occupy till I come.*" Here is no mention made of a general delivery of his goods into their hands, nor of their *ability*, but each one of the servants, irrespective of his own personal qualification, and also

of the circumstances in which he is placed, has precisely the same gift as his fellow. Surely, therefore, from this we must conclude that what is given in this parable means the gift of God's grace freely offered to the professing servants, that they may *occupy* it faithfully and diligently until the king returns. They are "no longer under the law, but *under grace*." And "unto every one of us," as the Apostle has it, "is *given grace*," "not according to our ability," but "according to the measure of the gift of Christ;" and what that measure is John the Baptist informs us—"And of his *fullness* have all we received, and grace for grace." The giving of the pound, then, to each servant, represents to us Christ's free offer to each one of his professing people, of his salvation with its unlimited means for his service, and its unmerited rewards.—(Titus ii. 11.)

And mark, then, on the day of reckoning, what a different view is set forth here from that in the parable of the talents. The two faithful servants mentioned here (manifestly a selection made for the sole purpose of eliminating this truth, the others being passed over in silence), are not said to have *doubled* their pound. Instead of this the first servant gains *ten* pounds by his one, the second *five*. By this we are given to understand the unbounded power of expansion in the gift of God's grace in Christ, when really and faithfully received by his servants. As far as the similitude teaches us, there was no reason why the servant who gained *five* pounds might not have gained *ten*, nor why the other might not have gained *twenty*. The limitation as regards the productiveness of the gift of God's grace, does not spring from any thing in that gift itself, but from lack of faithfulness and unceasing diligence on the part of those who have it. And, again, observe whatever be the return, whether ten or five, yet in each and every case it is the result of the gift itself. The servant by his want of vigilance and prayer may impede its full productiveness, but whatever be the gain must arise from the gift alone—"THY *pound* hath gained ten pounds." It is not here the man merely turning to account an opportunity of service, and so doubling his talent, though he can not do even *that* without God's help, but it is the inherent power of a received gift from God in Christ, which of itself bears much fruit.—(1 Peter iv. 10.)

Then look at the reward bestowed. The one man is made

ruler over *ten* cities, the other over *five*. The reward is in proportion to the gain. The latter, indeed, creates the capacity for the former. He who has made the *best* use of the gift of grace on earth, is on that very account most fitted for the highest place in heaven. And mark how the idea of *glory* enters into the reward here. In the parable of the talents the servants are admitted into the joy of their Lord, and there is perfect equality there. They are here raised to glory, and there is a difference. This is just what we might expect from the scope of this parable. The gift of grace ends in the gift of glory, and the rewards of the latter differing, indeed, in the various servants of Christ, shall be "reckoned not of debt but of grace."

Of the one faithless servant in this parable it is unnecessary to say much in addition to what has been remarked regarding the faithless one in the last parable. Suffice it to say, that sloth does not appear so much in the condemnation of the servant here as daring wickedness. He has not listened to the entreaty. "We beseech you that ye receive not the *grace* of God in vain." He has done what he could "to frustrate the *grace* of God." It may be, that he is the representative of those "ungodly men" of whom Jude writes, "who turn the *grace* of God into lasciviousness," and who thus brings upon themselves swift destruction—the blessings which they might have had forever taken from them, and given to add to the glory of the good and faithful servant.

But now turn for a moment to "*the citizens*" who are spoken of in this parable. The mention of these is accounted for when we consider our Lord's audience at the time. His own professed followers are solemnly addressed as "*the servants*" in the parable. The multitude (ver. 3), who were then pressing on Christ are "*the citizens*." In the momentary enthusiasm which they felt, they were ready to accompany him as a triumphant king to Jerusalem. They had come "nigh to Jerusalem," and "they thought that the kingdom of God" in its glory "should immediately appear." To check such expectation, and to exhibit the true character of this mixed multitude to themselves, was, then, the other object which Christ had in view in this parable. He first of all gave them to understand that he knew where all their present enthusiasm would end. Their shouts of "Hosanna" would be

exchanged for the cry "Crucify him." He would choose the manner of his departure in order to "receive his kingdom," and *then* their real sentiments would break forth—"*We will not have this man to reign over us.*" "We have no king but Cæsar." "Say *not,* The king of the Jews." And just as he then revealed what *their* conduct would be, he took occasion, as we have seen, to teach his own disciples that *before* the kingdom in its glory shall come, and be enjoyed, the kingdom in its grace must be received, and a long and toilsome *occupation* of the gift in the latter experienced, before the "honor, glory, and immortality" of the former can be attained. Then, once more at the close of the parable the rebellious citizens are brought forward for condign punishment. This intimates something different from the "destruction of the city," in the parable of the "Marriage of the King's Son." It points to some judgment yet future—that is, at the return of Christ when he shall have received the kingdom—which shall light upon the rebels on whom shall be found the red spot of the *murderer*, "His blood be on us and on our children."

It is interesting to observe how the Evangelist Mark seems to have been led by the Spirit to express in two or three verses the leading points of these last parables we have been considering. "For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants ('delivered unto them his goods'), and to every man his *work* (talents and pounds), and commanded *the porter* to watch. (Luke xii. 35, 36.) Watch ye, therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning; lest, coming suddenly, he find you *sleeping*" (as the ten virgins).

And in view of these solemn announcements, the "ministers and stewards of the mysteries of God" may well ask Peter's question, "Lord, speakest thou this parable *unto us*, or even to all?" (Luke xii. 41;) and then lay to heart our Lord's reply—"Who then, is that faithful and wise *steward*, whom his Lord shall make ruler?" &c. "*Blessed* is that servant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing" (as in ver. 35, *et seq*). "Of a truth, I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath." Blessed, indeed, will *all* the servants be who are faithful in their work for Christ. Specially blessed will *they* be, who, saved by

grace themselves, shall have besides "crowns of rejoicing in the day of the Lord Jesus," by the salvation of others. But, if faithfulness here will have a special reward, faithlessness will have its special punishment. If the "steward of the mysteries of Christ" forgets his Master amid his own duty, and acts as if he said, "my Lord delayeth his coming," and exhibits either of these two terrible characteristics of faithless pastors—tyranny and oppression under pretense of his derived authority—"beating the men-servants and the maidens"—or, self-indulgence at the expense of the flock—"feeding himself"—"eating the fat, clothing himself with wool"—"eating and drinking with the drunken," then will his Lord not merely, as in the case of the unprofitable servant, banish him from his presence, but "he will cut him asunder"—he will mark the condemnation of him by a specially terrible sentence, and "appoint him his portion with the unbelievers." He that, instead of feeding Christ's flock, made them his prey, shall have his own lot cast at length with unbelievers, and his acquired habit on earth of gratifying himself at the expense of others, will make him all the more terribly sensitive to the *portion* he shall at length receive with those who have forever banished themselves from the presence of God.

We come now to the closing parable in this series, and solemn indeed are the thoughts which it suggests.

"*And before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.*"—Matt. xxv. 32, 33.

This, indeed, forms a fitting conclusion not only to this section, but to the whole of the parables. We have met with this Shepherd of whom it testifies, first of all in the parable of the good Shepherd, in which we behold the excellency of his personal character and work. We have seen him again in the parable of the lost sheep, directly in contact with the poor sinner, on whose behalf all his toil has been undertaken, and all his work done. And now at last we see him as the Shepherd separating and dividing his sheep from the goats.

The context leaves us no room to doubt respecting the application here. "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory." The same day of which

the parables of the virgins and the talents and the pounds specially testify, is the day spoken of here. It is the day of the Bridegroom's return. It is the day of reckoning with the servants of the house. It is the day when it shall be seen that Christ *has* received the kingdom; and so he shall come in his glory, his holy angels with him, ready at once to execute the commands of their Master now seated on "his throne of glory."

Observe, too, this is merely giving a more enlarged and grand and solemn view of what is the main subject of the preceding parables. They all give in detail the *separation* of the wise from the foolish, the righteous from the wicked. The separation here is painted on larger canvas—and a multitude is set before us in the judgment, not a few household servants.

And this ought to lead us to the conclusion, that they are the same classes of persons who are judged in this parable as in the former. And, indeed, all that is said regarding this latter separation, makes it necessary that we regard it, as a separation between real and nominal Christians—not between the wicked generally and those who are saved from among them.

It can not be such a judgment as is spoken of in Revelation, where the great white throne is seen—where the sea and the land give up the dead which are in them, both small and great, because the very point on which the discrimination here recorded proceeds is one which can not be applied to *all* mankind. The condemnation here hinges on the manifestation of an unloving spirit toward Christ's servants, as proving that there is no love to Christ himself. The welcome, on the other hand, hinges on the very reverse of this. But hundreds of millions of the human race never heard of the name of Christ, or had an opportunity either of receiving him or rejecting him in the persons of his servants. They, therefore, can not be meant in a separation which proceeds wholly upon a test which has never been applied to them.

We must regard, then, "the nations," who are said here to be gathered before Christ, as the nations in the world at the time of Christ's second coming, and those of them and in them who have had the Gospel preached to them, whose ears have listened to the joyful sound, and who have heard the summons, "Repent and believe the Gospel"—"Come, for all things are ready." And

thus we are brought again into the presence of the same event, as is intimated by the harvest, when the tares are separated from the wheat, and the bad separated from the good when the net is drawn to the shore. The separation here is just as there, not between the bad and good generally, but between the bad and good within the outward fold of Christ's church, between those who call him only "Lord, Lord," and those who really "do his will." And here we have the true distinction between this nominal and real discipleship—when the one profess to be Christ's, they "do *it* NOT unto him"—the other, on the contrary, "do all in the name of the Lord Jesus," and for his sake alone.

And just, then, as we have seen the Lord at the close of the Jewish Dispensation, "searching Jerusalem as with candles," so here we see him at the close of this dispensation searching the Gentile churches, with this great and marked distinction, that the former took place at the close of his first advent, the latter will take place when he returns again to take the kingdom to himself and reign forever.

Reader, may you and I be able to "abide the day of his appearing," by seeing one on the throne whom our hearts tell us that we love. May it not need a spoken word then to make us understand that our place is on the right hand of the kingly Shepherd. And may we discover amid the unutterable blessings there—the "exceeding great weight of glory" there—that one priceless gem above all the others has been given to us, which even in the new Jerusalem will shine brightest and most lovely, —the "confession" of him who sits upon the throne, "*Ye have done it unto me.*"

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX A.

"THIS remarkable narrative brings before us the whole question of DEMONIACAL POSSESSIONS in the Gospels, which I shall treat here once for all, and refer to this note hereafter. I would then remark in general,—(1.) That the Gospel narratives are *distinctly pledged to the historic truth of these occurrences.* Either they are true, or the Gospels are false. For they do not stand in the same, or a similar position, with the discrepancies in details, so frequent between the evangelists; but they form part of that general groundwork in which all agree. (2.) Nor can it be said that they represent the *opinion of the time*, and use words in accordance with it. This might have been difficult to answer, but that they not only give such expressions as δαιμονιζόμενος, δαιμονισθεὶς (Mark v. 18; Luke viii. 36), and other like ones, but relate to us *words spoken by the Lord Jesus*, in which *the personality and presence of the demons is distinctly implied.* See especially Luke xi. 17–26. Now either our Lord spoke these words, or he did not. If he did not, then we must at once set aside the concurrent testimony of the evangelists to a plain matter of fact; in other words, establish a principle which will overthrow equally every fact related in the Gospels. If he did, it is wholly at variance with any Christian idea of the perfection of truthfulness in him who was truth itself, to suppose him to have used such plain and solemn words repeatedly, before his disciples and the Jews, in encouragement of, and connivance at, a lying superstition. (3.) After these remarks, it will be unnecessary to refute that view of demoniacal possession which makes it *identical with mere bodily disease*, as it is interpreted above; but we may observe, that it is every where in the Gospels distinguished from disease, and in such a way as to show that, at all events, the two were not in that day confounded. (See Matt. ix. 32, 33, and compare Mark vii. 32.) (4.) The question then arises, *Granted the plain historical truth of demoniacal possession*, WHAT WAS IT? This question, in the suspension or

withdrawal of the gift of 'discerning of spirits' in the modern Church, is not easy to answer. But we may gather from the Gospel narratives some important ingredients for our description. The demoniac was one whose being was strangely interpenetrated ('*possessed*' is the most exact word that could be found) by one or more of those fallen spirits, who are constantly asserted in Scripture (under the name of δαίμονες, δαιμόνια, πνεύματα πονηρὰ, πνεύματα ἀκάθαρτα, their chief being ὁ διάβολος, or σατανᾶς) to be the enemies and tempters of the souls of men. (See Acts v. 3; John xiii. 3, *et passim.*) He stood in a totally different position from the abandoned wicked man, who morally is given over to the devil. This latter would be a subject for punishment; but the demoniac for deepest compassion. There appears to have been in him a *double will* and *double consciousness*—sometimes the cruel spirit thinking and speaking in him, sometimes his poor, crushed self-crying out to the Saviour of men for mercy; a terrible advantage taken, and personal realization, by the malignant powers of evil, of the fierce struggle between sense and conscience in the man of morally divided life. Hence it has been not improbably supposed, that some of these demoniacs may have arrived at their dreadful state through various progressive degrees of guilt and sensual abandonment. 'Lavish sin, and especially indulgence in sensual lusts, superinducing, as it would often, a weakness in the nervous system, which is the especial band between body and soul, may have laid open these unhappy ones to the fearful incursions of the powers of darkness.' (*Trench on the Miracles*, p. 160.) (5.) The frequently urged objection, How comes it that this malady is not *now* among us? admits of an easy answer, even if the assumption be granted. The period of our Lord's being on earth was certainly more than any other in the history of the world under the dominion of evil. The foundations of man's moral being were broken up, and the 'hour and power of darkness' prevailing. Trench excellently remarks, 'It was exactly the crisis for such soul-maladies as these, in which the spiritual and bodily should be thus strangely interlinked, and it is nothing wonderful that they should have abounded at that time; for the predominance of certain spiritual maladies at certain epochs of the world's history, which were specially fitted for their generation, with their gradual decline and disappearance in others less congenial to them, is a fact itself admitting no manner of question.' (Pp. 162, 163.) . . . . But, (6.) The assumption contained in the objection above, must not be thus unreservedly granted. We can not tell in how many cases of insanity the malady may not even now be traced to direct demoniacal possession. And, finally, (7.) The above view, which I am persuaded is the only one honestly consistent with any

kind of belief in the truth of the gospel narratives, will offend none but those who deny the existence of the world of spirits altogether, and who are continually striving to narrow the limits of our belief in that which is invisible; a view which at every step involves difficulties far more serious than those from which it attempts to escape."—(*Alford's Greek Testament*, vol. i. pp. 76, 77, 2d ed.)

APPENDIX B.

The following extract from the writings of one of the most celebrated of modern authors, will show the lax view entertained by many of the VALUE of man's work :—

"I trust this poor woman had remaining sense to feel and join in the import of my prayers. But let us humbly hope we are judged of by our opportunities of religious and moral instruction. In some degree she might be considered an uninstructed heathen, even in the bosom of a Christian country; and let us remember, that the errors and vices of an ignorant life were balanced by instances of disinterested attachment, amounting almost to heroism. To him who can alone weigh our crimes and errors against our efforts toward virtue, we consign her with awe, but not without hope."

APPENDIX C.

"Another instance, I would humbly submit, is in the common application of Matt. xvi. 18, 'The gates of hell (or, *hades*) shall not prevail against it,' (κατισχύσουσιν κύτῆς). The idea is that of prevailing by superior strength to keep an adversary down. This text is almost always quoted as a promise that Satan shall never destroy Christ's Church on earth. But what can the gates of *hades* have to do with the Church on earth? But viewing *hades* as the place of departed spirits, where they remain till the resurrection, the passage is clear, and the excellence of the promise at once seen. It is a promise that the Church shall not remain always in that place of intermediate rest, but shall be ultimately delivered from it by him who 'hath the keys of *hades* and of death.' (Rev. i. 18.)"—(*Goode's Rule of Faith*, vol. i. p. 113, 1st ed.)

APPENDIX D.

"It might be here, perhaps, urged, that the picture drawn in the parable, if it be applied to more than a very few the deepest sunk in de-

pravity, is an exaggeration both of the misery and also of the wickedness even of those who have turned their backs upon God: that in the corruptest times not all, and in more moral epochs only a few, even of these fall so low in wretchedness and guilt. This is true, yet all might thus fall. By the first departure from God, all this misery, and all this sin, are rendered possible, they all are its legitimate results; and they only do not always follow, because God, in his infinite mercy, does not suffer sin, in all cases, to bear *all* the bitter fruits which it might, and which are implicitly contained in it. In the present case, it *is* suffered to bear all its bitter fruit: we have one who has done 'evil with both hands earnestly,' and debased himself even unto hell: and the parable would be incomplete without this; it would not be a parable for all sinners; since it would fail to show that there is no extent of departure from God, which renders a return to him impossible."—(*Trench's Notes on the Parables*, pp. 400, 401.)

APPENDIX E.

"But it still remains to consider in what sense that which is said of leaving the seed to itself can be attributed to Christ. Olshausen suggests this explanation of the difficulties above noted. It is true, he says, that the inner spiritual life of men is never in any stage of its development without the care and watchfulness of the Lord who first communicated that life; yet are there two moments when he may be said especially to visit the soul; at the beginning of the spiritual life, which is the seed-time, and again when he takes his people to himself, which is their time of harvest. Between these times lies a period in which the work of the harvest is going forward without any such manifest interpositions on his part—not indeed without the daily supply of his Spirit and the daily ordering of his providence, but so as that he does not put to his hand so plainly and immediately as at those two cardinal moments. And the difficulty will be slighter when we make application of the parable—as undoubtedly we are bound to do—to the growth and progress of the universal Church, and not only to that of the individual soul. The Lord at his first coming in the flesh sowed the word of the kingdom in the world, planted a Church therein: which having done he withdrew himself; the heavens received him till the time of the consummation of all things. Many and many a time since then the cry has ascended in his ears, 'Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down!'—often it has seemed to man as though the hour of interference had ar-

rived, as though his Church were at its last gasp, at the point to die, as though its enemies were about to prevail against it, and to extinguish it forever, unless he appeared for its deliverance. Yet he has not come forth, he has left it to surmount its obstacles, not indeed without his mighty help, but without his visible interference. He has left the divine seed, the plant which he has planted, to grow on by night and by day, through storm and through sunshine, increasing secretly with the increase of God; and will let it so continue, till it has borne and brought to maturity all its appointed fruit. And only then, when the harvest of the world is ripe, when the number of his elect people is accomplished, will he again the second time appear unto salvation, thrusting in his sickle, and reaping the earth, and gathering the wheat into his barns."—(*Trench's Notes on the Parables*, pp. 286, 287.)

APPENDIX F.

"In regard to the word *Zizania*, translated tares, I am disposed to think that it was a plant resembling wheat as regards its foliage, and probably only fully distinguishable from it when the harvest came. It seems to be a grass, and in all probability is the *Lolium temulentum*, or Darnel-grass, which is said to have deleterious qualities. There is an Arabic word *Ziwan*, which is considered as meaning darnel. Avicenna describes two kinds of ziwan, one resembling wheat of which bread is made, and the other inducing intoxication, and often found among corn. The genus *Triticum* (wheat), and the genus *Lolium* (darnel), are very like each other in appearance. They are readily distinguished when in fruit, by the *Triticum* having two glumes, and having the florets placed with their edges toward the axis, and the *Lolium* having only one glume and the back of the florets next the axis. I am constantly in the habit of showing my pupils these distinctions between *Triticum repens* and *Lolium perenne*, which otherwise are very like. Indeed, an ordinary observer would not perceive the difference. These are the reasons why I consider *Zizania* as being the *infelix lolium* of Virgil. Both wheat and tares belonged no doubt to the family of grasses, and could only be separated with certainty at the time of hervest."

APPENDIX G.

"As to the mustard, the Greek *Sinapi*, the plant appears to be *Salvadora persica*, known under the Arabic name of *Khardal*. This word *khar-*

dal is the common name for mustard in the East, and it is applied to a plant quite different from our mustard-plant. The plant in the East is a tree of considerable size, a native of the hot and dry parts of India, Arabia, and Persia. The berries are much smaller than a grain of black pepper, and are pungent like cresses. The plant has a small seed, which becomes a tree, in the branches of which the birds can and do lodge. The seed is used in the same way as our mustard."

THE END.

CATALOGUE OF BOOKS

PUBLISHED BY

ROBERT CARTER & BROTHERS,

285 BROADWAY, NEW YORK.

Abercrombie's Contest and the Armor,	$ 31
Adam's Three Divine Sisters,	50
Advice to Young Christians,	30
Alexander's Counsels to the Young,	31
Alleine's Gospel Promises,	30
—— Life and Letters,	60
Ancient History, 4 vols.,	2 00
Anderson's Annals of the English Bible,	1 75
—— Family Book,	75
Anley's (Miss C.) Earlswood, a Tale,	75
Australia, Loss of the Brig,	25
Bagster's Genuineness and Authen. of Bible,	60
Baxter's Saint's Rest,	60
—— Call to Unconverted,	30
—— Choice Works,	50
Bible Companion, with Introd. by Dr. Tyng,	40
Bible Expositor,	50
Bickersteth on Prayer,	40
—— On Lord's Supper,	30
—— Waters from Well Spring,	60
Blossoms of Childhood,	75
Blunt's Coincidences and Paley's Horæ Paulinæ,	2 00
Bogatsky's Golden Treasury,	50
Bolton's Call to the Lamb's,	50
Bonar on Leviticus,	1 50
—— Bible Hymn Book,	50
—— Man, his Religion and his World,	40
—— Night of Weeping,	30
—— Morning of Joy,	40
—— Story of Grace,	30
—— Truth and Error,	40
Bonnet's Family of Bethany,	40
—— Meditations on Lord's Prayer,	40
Booth's Reign of Grace,	75
Borrow's Bible and Gypsies of Spain,	1 00
Boston's Four-fold State,	50
—— Crook in Lot,	30
Brett's Indian Tribes of Guiana,	50
Bridgeman's Daughters of China,	75
Bridges on the Christian Ministry,	1 50
—— On the CXIX Psalm,	1 00
—— on Proverbs,	2 00
—— Memoir of Mary J. Graham,	1 00
—— Works, 3 vols.,	5 00
Broken Bud, (The)	75
Brown's Concordance, plain, 20; gilt,	30
—— on the Discourses and Sayings of Christ	6 00
—— Sufferings and Glories of Messiah,	1 50
—— On Peter,	2 50
—— Galatians,	2 00
—— Explication,	60
—— Explication, 18mo.,	10
—— On Second Advent	25
Buchanan's Comfort in Affliction,	40
Buchanan on the Holy Spirit,	$ 50
Bunbury's Glory, Glory, &c.	25
Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, 12mo,	1 00
—— Do do 12mo., gilt,	1 50
—— Do do 18mo.,	50
—— Greatness of Soul,	50
—— Jerusalem Sinner Saved,	50
Burns' Christian Fragments,	40
—— Parables and Miracles,	75
Butler's Works,	1 50
—— Sermons,	1 00
—— Analogy,	75
—— Analogy with Wilson's Criticisms,	1 25
Calvin's Life and Times,	3 00
Cameron's Farmer's Daughter,	30
Cecil's Works,	3 00
—— Original Thoughts,	1 00
—— Remains and Miscellanies,	1 00
—— Sermons,	1 00
—— Memoir of Mrs. Hawkes,	1 00
Chalmers' Sermons,	3 00
—— Romans,	1 50
—— Miscellanies,	1 50
—— Select Works, containing the above,	6 00
—— Evidences,	1 25
—— Natural Theology,	1 25
—— Moral Philosophy,	60
—— Commercial Discourses,	60
—— Astronomical do	60
Charnock on the Attributes	3 00
—— Choice Works	50
Cheever's Lectures on Pilgrim's Progress,	1 00
—— Powers of the World to Come,	1 00
Child's Own Story Book,	50
Christian Experience,	75
—— Retirement,	75
Clara Stanley, Illustrated,	50
Clark's Walk about Zion,	75
—— Pastor's Testimony,	75
—— Awake Thou Sleeper,	75
—— Young Disciple,	88
—— Gathered Fragments,	1 00
Clarke's Scripture Promises,	30
Claremont Tales, (The)	50
Collier's Tale,	25
Colquhoun's World's Religion,	50
Commandment with Promise,	75
Companion for Afflicted, 1st and 2d Part, each,	15
Cowper's Poetical Works, 2 vols,	1 50
Cummings' Christ Receiving Sinners,	30
—— Message from God,	30
Cunningham's World without Souls,	30
Cuyler's Stray Arrows,	30
Daily Commentary, 8vo.,	3 00
Dale's Golden Psalm,	60

D'Aubigné's Reformation, 5 vols., cloth . $2 50
Do do fine edition, . . 3 50
Do do 8vo., 5 vols. in one, 1 50
Do do vol. 5, separate clo., 60
—— Authority of God, ... 75
—— Life of Cromwell, ... 50
—— Germany, England, and Scotland, . 75
—— Luther and Calvin, ... 25
Davies' Sermons, 3 vols., ... 2 00
Davidson's Connexions, new edition, 12mo. . 1 00
David's Psalms, 12mo., ... 75
Do do do gilt edges, . . . 1 00
Do do do Turkey morocco, . 2 00
Do do 18mo., plain sheep, . . 38
Do do 48mo., sheep, ... 20
Do do do morocco, ... 25
Do do do gilt edges, . . . 31
Do do do tucks, ... 50
Do do Brown's Notes, sheep, . . 50
Do do do do morocco, . 1 00
Dick's Lectures on Acts, ... 1 50
—— Theology, 1 vol., ... 2 50
Dickinson's Responses, ... 1 00
—— Scenes from Sacred History, . . . 1 00
Dill's (Rev. Dr.) Ireland's Miseries, . . . 75
Doddridge's Rise and Progress, ... 40
—— Life Col. Gardiner, ... 30
Duncan's (II,) Philos. of the Seasons, 4 vols., . 3 00
—— Life, ... 75
—— Cottage Fireside, ... 40
—— Tales of Scottish Peasantry, . . . 50
—— (Mrs.) Memoir of M. L. Duncan, . . 75
—— Memoir of G. A. Lundie, . . . 50
—— America, As I Found It, . . . 1 00
—— Children of the Manse, ... 50
—— Memoir of George B. Phillips, . . 25
—— (M. L.) Rhymes for my Children, . . 25
Edgar's Variations of Popery, ... 1 00
Edwards' Charity and its Fruits, 18mo., . . 50
English Pulpit (The), ... 1 50
Erskine's Gospel Sonnets, ... 50
Evidences of Christianity, University of Va., . 2 50
Family Worship, Prayers for Every Day, . 3 00
Fanny and her Mamma, ... 50
Far Off, illustrated, ... 50
First Day of Week, 18mo., ... 25
Fisk's Holy Land, 12mo., ... 1 00
—— Orphan Tales, ... 25
Fleury's Life of David, ... 60
Ford's Decapolis, ... 25
Foster's Essays on Decision of Character, . 75
—— Popular Ignorance, ... 75
Fox's (Rev. Henry Watson) Life of, . . 1 00
Frank Harrison, ... 30
—— Netherton, ... 40
Fry, The Listener, illustrated, ... 1 00
—— Christ our Example, ... 75
—— Do. Law, ... 60
—— Sabbath Musings, ... 40
—— Scripture Reader's Guide, . . . 30
Gaussen's Parables of Spring, ... 40
Geological Cosmogony, ... 30
Gilfillan's Martyrs, Heroes, and Bards, . . 60
God in the Storm, ... 25
Goode's Better Covenant, ... 60
Graham's Test of Faith 30

Gray's Poems, illust., 8vo., gilt, $1 50; plain, $1 00
Griffith's Live while you Live, . . . 30
Haldane's (Robert and James) Lives of, 8vo., . 2 00
—— Exposition of Romans, ... 2 50
Hall's Select Works, ... 75
Hamilton's Life in Earnest, ... 30
—— Mount of Olives, ... 30
—— Harp on Willows, ... 30
—— Thankfulness, ... 30
—— Life of Hall, ... 30
—— Happy Home, ... 50
—— Life of Lady Colquhoun, . . . 75
—— Royal Preacher, ... 85
—— Lamp and the Lantern, . . . 40
—— Life of Williams, ...
Hawker's Morning Portion, ... 60
—— Evening do. 60
—— Zion's Pilgrim, ... 30
Hengstenberg on the Apocalypse, . . . 3 50
Henry's Commentary, fine edition, half calf, 16 00
—— Do. plain do. sheep, 10 00
—— Method for Prayer, ... 40
—— Communicant's Companion, . . . 40
—— Daily Walk with God, ... 30
—— Pleasantness of a Religious Life, . . 30
—— Choice Works, ... 50
—— (Philip) Life and Times, . . . 50
Hervey's Meditations, ... 40
Hetherington's Hist. of the Church of Scotland, 1 50
—— History of the Westminster Divines, . 75
Hewitson's Life, ... 75
Hill's Divinity, ... 2 00
—— (Rowland) Life, ... 75
Historic Doubts, by Whately, ... 50
History of Puritans and Pilgrim Fathers, . 1 00
—— of Reformation in Europe, . . . 40
Hooker's Uses of Adversity, ... 30
—— Philosophy of Unbelief, . . . 75
Horne's Introduction, ... 3 50
—— on Psalms, ... 1 50
Howard and the Prison World of Europe, . 1 00
Howe's Redeemer's Tears, ... 50
Howell's Life, ... 30
Howie's Scots Worthies, ... 1 50
Huss (John) Life of, ... 25
Infant's Progress, ... 75
Jacobus on Matthew, ... 75
—— Questions on Matthew, ... 15
—— on Mark and Luke, ... 75
—— on John and Acts, ...
James' Anxious Inquirer, ... 30
—— Christian Progress, ... 30
—— True Christian 30
—— Widow Directed, ... 30
—— Young Man from Home, . . . 30
—— Course of Faith, ... 75
—— Young Woman's Friend, . . . 75
—— Christian Professor, ... 75
—— Christian Duty, ... 75
—— Christian Father's Present, . . . 75
Jamie Gordon, 18mo., ... 50
Janeway's Heaven upon Earth, . . . 50
—— Token for Children, ... 30
Jay's Morning Exercises, ... 75
—— Evening do. 75
—— Morning and Evening do., fine edition,

Jay's Christian Contemplated, . . . $ 40
——— Jubilee Memorial, ... 30
Jerram's Tribute to an only Daughter, . . 30
Johnson's (Dr. Samuel) Rasselas, a Tale, . 50
——— (Rev. W. A. B.) Life of, . . . 1 00
Kennedy's Profession is not Principle, . . 30
——— Jessy Allan, ... 25
——— Anna Ross, ... 30
——— Father Clement, ... 30
——— Decision, ... 25
Key to (the Assembly's) Catechism, . . 20
King's Geology and Religion, ... 75
——— on the Eldership, ... 50
Kitto's Daily Bible Illustrations, Morning Ser. 4 00
——— Do. do. Evening do. 4 00
——— Lost Senses, ... 1 00
Krummacher's Martyr Lamb, ... 40
——— Elijah, ... 40
——— Last Days of Elisha, ... 50
Last Day of Week, ... 25
Law and the Testimony, ... 3 00
Leyburn's Soldier of Cross, ... 1 00
Life in New York, ... 40
Life of Vagrant, ... 30
Lighted Valley, Memoir of Miss Bolton, . 75
Line upon Line, ... 30
Little Annie, 1st and 2d Books, . . . 75
Little Lessons for Little Learners, . . . 50
Living to Christ, ... 60
Lowrie's Letters, ... 25
——— India, ... 75
Luther on Galatians, ... 1 50
Mackay's Wyckliffites, ... 75
Magie's Spring Time of Life, ... 50
Mamma's Bible Stories, ... 50
Sequel to do. 50
Marshall, (Mrs.) My Friend's Family, . . 25
——— (Rev. Walter) on Sanctification, . . 50
Martin (Sarah) Life of, ... 30
Martyn (Henry) Life of, ... 60
Martyrs and Covenanters of Scotland, . . 40
McCheyne's Life, Letters, and Remains, . . 1 50
——— Sermons, separate, ... 2 00
——— Familiar Letters, ... 50
——— Complete Works, ... 3 00
McCosh on the Divine Government, . . 2 00
McCrindell's Convent, a Tale, ... 50
——— School Girl in France, ... 50
McFarlane's Mountains of the Bible, . . 75
McGhee on the Ephesians, ... 25
McGilvray's Peace in Believing, . . . 25
McLelland on the Canon and Interpretation, . 75
McLeod's True Godliness, ... 60
Meikle's Solitude Sweetened, ... 60
Menteath's Lays of Kirk and Covenant, . . 75
Michael Kemp, ... 40
Miller's Geology of the Bass Rock, . . . 75
Miller Roger, Life of, ... 30
Missions, Origin and History of, . . . 3 50
Missionary of Kilmany, ... 60
Moffat's Southern Africa, ... 75
Monod's Lucilla, ... 40
More (H.), Private Devotion, 18mo., . . 50
——— Do. do. 32mo., . . 20
Morell's Modern Philosophy, ... 3 00
Morning of Life, ... 40
Morning and Night Watches, . . . $ 60
Murphey's Bible and Geology, ... 1 00
My School Boy Days, ... 30
My Youthful Companions, ... 30
Near Home, illustrated, ... 50
New Cobwebs to Catch Little Flies, . . 50
Newton's (Rev. John) Works, ... 2 00
——— Memoir of M. M. Jasper, . . . 30
Noel's Infant Piety, ... 25
Old Humphrey's Works, 12 vols. each, . . 40
Old White Meeting House, ... 40
Olmsted's Counsels for Impenitent, . . . 50
Opie on Lying, ... 40
Osborne's World of Waters, ... 75
Owen's Works, 16 vols., ... 20 00
——— on Spiritual Mindedness, . . . 60
Paley's Horæ Paulinæ, ... 75
Pascal's Provincial Letters, ... 1 00
——— Memoir of Jaqueline Pascal, . .
Pastor's Daughter, ... 40
Paterson on Catechism, ... 50
Pearson on Infidelity, 8vo., ...
Peep of Day, ... 30
Phillip's Devotional Guides, ... 1 50
——— Marys, Marthas, Lydias, Hannahs, and Love of the Spirit, each, ... 40
——— Young Man's Closet Library, . . 75
Pike's True Happiness, ... 30
——— Divine Origin, ... 30
Pollok's Course of Time, 16mo., . . . 1 00
——— Do. do. 18mo., . . . 40
——— Life, by Scott, ... 1 00
——— Tales of Covenanters, 16mo., . . 75
——— Helen of Glen, ... 25
——— Persecuted Family, ... 25
——— Ralph Gemmel, ... 25
Poole's Annotations, cloth, . . . 10 00
——— Do. half calf, . . . 12 00
Porteus on Matthew, ... 75
Powerscourt's Letters, ... 75
Precept upon Precept, ... 30
Psalms in Hebrew, ... 50
Proudfit's Counsels to Young, ...
Retrospect, The, ... 40
Richmond's Annals of Poor, ... 40
——— Domestic Portraiture, ... 75
Rogers' Folded Lamb, ... 40
——— Jacob's Well, ... 40
Romaine on Faith, ... 60
——— Letters, ... 60
Rowland's Common Maxims, ... 75
Rutherford's Letters, ... 1 50
Ryle's Living or Dead, ... 75
——— Startling Questions, ... 75
——— Wheat or Chaff, ... 75
——— Young Man's Christian Year, . . 15
Saphir, Philipp, Life of, ... 30
Schmid's One Hundred Tales, illustrated, . 50
Scott's Force of Truth, ... 25
Scotia's Bards, 8vo., illustrated, . . .
Scougal's Works, ... 40
Scripture Promises, ... 15
——— Truths, ... 15
——— Facts, 32mo., illustrated, . . . 50
Select Christian Authors, ... 2 00
——— Works of James, Venn, &c., . . 1 50

Serle's Christian Remembrancer, . . $ 50
Sherwood's Clever Stories, ... 50
——— Duty is Safety, ... 25
——— Jack the Sailor Boy, ... 25
——— Think before you Act, ... 25
Short Prayers, ... 15
Sick Room (The), ... 15
Sigourney's (Mrs. L. M.) Water Drops, . . 75
——— Girls' Book, ... 40
——— Boys' Book, ... 40
——— Child's Book, ... 35
——— Faded Hope, ... 50
——— Letters to Pupils, ... 75
——— Olive Leaves, ... 75
——— Memoir of Mrs. Cook, ... 75
Simeon's Life, ... 2 00
Sinclair's Modern Accomplishments, . . 75
——— Modern Society, ... 75
——— Charlie Seymour, ... 30
——— Hill and Valley, ... 75
——— Holiday House, illustrated, . . . 75
Sinner's Friend, ... 25
Smith's Green Pastures for the Lord's Flock, . 1 00
Smyth's Bereaved Parents Consoled, . . 75
Songs in the House of My Pilgrimage, . . 75
Sorrowing yet Rejoicing, 32mo., . . . 30
Spring's Memoir of H. L. Murray, . . . 1 50
Stevenson's Christ on Cross, ... 75
——— Lord our Shepherd, ... 60
Stories on Lord's Prayer, ... 30
Stuckley's Gospel Glass, ... 75
Sumner on Matthew and Mark, . . . 75
Symington on the Atonement, . . . 75
Taylor's (Isaac) Loyola, ... 1 00
——— Natural History of Enthusiasm, . . 75
——— (Jeremy) Sermons, ... 1 50
——— (Jane) Life and Correspondence, . . 40
——— Contributions of Q. Q., . . . 1 00
——— Display, a Tale, ... 30
——— Mother and Daughter, ... 30
——— Essays in Rhyme, ... 30
——— Original Poems, ... 40

Taylor's (Jane) Hymns for Infant Minds, $ 40
——— Limed Twigs to Catch Young Birds, . 50
——— Rhymes for Nursery, ... 50
Tennent's Life, ... 25
Theological Sketch Book, ... 3 00
Tholuck's Circle Human Life, ... 30
Three Months under the Snow, . . . 30
Tucker's Rainbow in North, ... 75
——— Abeokuta, or Sunrise in the Tropics, . 75
Turnbull's Genius of Scotland, . . . 1 00
——— Pulpit Orators of France, &c., . . 1 00
Turretine's Works, ... 10 00
Tyng's Law and Gospel, ... 1 50
——— Christ is All, ... 1 50
——— Israel of God, ... 1 50
——— Recollections of England, . . . 1 00
——— Christian Titles, ... 75
——— Lamb from Flock, ... 25
Very Little Tales for Very Little Children, . 75
Wardlaw on Miracles, ... 75
Waterbury's Book for Sabbath, . . . 40
Watt's Divine Songs, ... 40
Waugh's Life, ... 1 00
Week, The, ... 75
Whately's Kingdom of Christ, . . . 75
White's Meditations on Prayer, . . . 40
——— Believer, ... 40
——— Second Advent, ... 40
——— (H. K.) Works, ... 1 50
Whitecross' Anecdotes on the Catechism, . 30
Wilberforce's Practical View, . . . 1 00
Williams' Life, ... 1 00
Willison on Sacrament, ... 50
Wilson's Lights and Shadows, . . . 75
Wine and Milk, ... 25
Winer's Idioms, ... 2 50
Winslow on Declension, ... 60
——— Midnight Harmonies, ... 60
Woodruff's Shades of Character, . . . 1 50
Wylie's Journey over Prophecy, . . . 30
Young's Night Thoughts, 16mo., . . . 1 00
——— Do. 18mo., . . . 40

ADDENDA.

Africa and America Described. By the author of the "Peep of Day." 16mo. . . $ 75
Ballantyne (R. H.) Mabel Grant; a Highland story. 18mo. 50
Bonar (Rev. Horatius) The Eternal Day. 18mo. 50
Brown (Dr. John) Exposition of the Discourses and Sayings of Christ. New edition, 2 vols. 8vo. 4 00
Charles Roussel; or, Honestry and Industry. By the author of "Three Months Under the Snow." 18mo. 50
Cheever (Dr.) The Right of the Bible in the Common Schools. 16mo. 75
Family Prayer. By the author of the "Morning and Night Watches." 16mo. . . . 75
Jay (Rev. Wm.) Female Scripture Characters. Royal 12mo. 1 00
Jay (Rev. Wm.) Morning and Evening Exercises. New ed., on large type, 4 vols. 12mo. $4 00
Kitto. Daily Bible Illustrations. Now completed. 8 vols. 12mo. 8 00
Quarles' Emblems, Divine and Moral. 16mo. Illustrated. 1 00
Scott (Rev. W. A., D.D.) Daniel a Model for Young Men. 8vo. . . . . .
Self Explanatory Bible, with the References printed out at length. Half calf $4.50, Morocco $6.00, Morocco gilt $6.50.
Vara; or the Child of Adoption. An original tale of great beauty and interest. 12mo. . 1 00
Woodcutter of Lebanon, and Exiles of Lucerna. By the author of "Morning and Night Watches." 18mo. 50
Words of Jesus. By the same author. 16mo. 40

ETURN
23
1935

GTU Library
2400 Ridge Road
Berkeley, CA 94709
For renewals call (510) 649-2500
All items are subject to recall.

GTU Library
3 2400 00536 8562

Santa Clara University
3 2400 00536 8562